Her Mountain Lover

by Hamlin Garland

Mick

Carolyn L. Adams,
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Wbg.

"SO I 'M TO RIDE THIS TIN PONY, AM I?" SAID JIM.

HER MOUNTAIN LOVER

BY

HAMLIN GARLAND

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HER MOUNTAIN LOVER

I

A MEETING IN THE LOW COUNTRY

THE young miner uttered a shout of protest.

"Say, now, doc, don't do that. What could I do in London? Why, they 'd sure eat me up there. I can't even count their durn money. I won't do it. That 's askin' too much of a pardner."

The Chicago member of the firm smiled. "Jim, you 're taking on too much worry. They 're a slow-going lot over there. You 'll have plenty of time to count your change while they 're getting out o' their chairs. The question is, have we a good property or not?"

"Property 's all right, but—"

"Do we need money, or don't we?"

"Yes. But suppose I don't—"

"You 've *got to*. That mine properly handled is worth five hundred thousand dollars, and the thing for you to do is to interest some English 'sport' who has money to throw at the cats, and get him to take a half-interest and help us develop the property."

"But see here, doc. I was raised in the hills. I 'm no water-dog. I can't paddle a stone-boat. It makes me seasick to see a girl shake a table-cloth. I can't go over there in a boat."

"You can't walk."

"A Pullman 's good enough for me. I guess I 'll put off goin' to Europe till I can go by train." The young fellow left his chair, and began pacing the office floor. "See here, doc; I don't want to gigg back — I 'm a sure-'nough pardner. Say the word, and I 'll jump a cayuse and back him clear to the Yukon valley; but this going to England in a boat makes my fur bristle; it does for sure."

The doctor, turning in his noiseless swivel-chair, followed his partner with amused glance.

"Jim, the thing is settled. It would n't do to send a 'slick one' on such business; he 'd queer the whole show. No; you 're the man. The tone of your voice carries conviction. You got me to go into a hole when no one else could win a nickel out o' my pocket with the best dirt in the pan. My going is out of the question. It would n't do to leave Maidie and the babes, and, besides, I 've got to hold on to my practice here till you make a raise. You remember I 've kept the thing going now for two years."

The younger man's handsome face grew tender. "That 's the God's truth, doc. It 's time I made a break. The stuff is in there all right, all right, and we 've got to have help to get it out. I see all that." He put both hands in his pockets and asked: "When had I better start?"

"Saturday's boat."

Jim fell into a chair. "Great Scott! Soon as that?"

"Sooner the quicker," replied the inexorable partner.

"I know; but I need an outfit."

"What do you want? This is n't exactly like getting married. That 's a neat suit

you 've got on. A sack-suit like that will go anywhere — Wagon Wheel or London."

"But I thought they all wore plug-hats and dress-suits over there."

"Some of 'em do, and others wear smock-shirts. You 're all right just as you are. In fact, it would be good business for you to dress just as you do in Wagon Wheel. They like an American to be picturesque; and, besides, you 're the real thing — cow-boy, miner, trailer. You work this thing right, and some young 'scion of nobility,' as the reporters say, will get curious as a buck antelope, and you can rope him, and bring him and his pile right back with you. But you don't seem to be jubilating?" remarked the doctor, still vastly amused at his partner's troubled face.

Jim did not smile. "Jubilating! Honestly, doc, this is the toughest proposition I ever had to face. It sure takes the wind out of me. But I 'll do it." He rose, and his frame expanded with power. "I 'll rozum up my hands, and take a fall out o' the British aristocracy, or know the reason why. It 's our last play, and — we make it."

The doctor also rose, and extended his hand. As they clasped hands they looked

each into the other's face in perfect understanding. They were both stalwart fellows, and nearly of a height. Jim was not more than twenty-five; the doctor looked some five or six years older, plump and prosperous. He wore a full beard to make him look middle-aged, but his step betrayed him. Jim was dressed in a shapely sack-suit of rough brown cloth, and wore a soft hat, such as professional men wear in the Middle West. Its large brim suited well his broad shoulders and thick brown hair. His clean-shaven chin was strong and fine, and his brown eyes were clear and pleasant.

"Well, now the thing is settled," said the doctor, briskly pulling down the lid of his desk, "let 's go out and see Maidie. She 's been across twice, and will fix you out in an hour with a full schedule, and you can get off on the noon train to-morrow. Nothing pleases her more than to help some one set sail for Europe."

Jim was silent, and continued silent all the way down the elevator. Once in the street, which was roaring full of people on their way homeward, the doctor talked of their mine, secure in the midst of the crowd.

"The reason I advocate this London scheme is, they don't want the whole hog over there. I mean they don't know the conditions as well as Americans. They 'd take it all if they did, but they don't. They 're willing to allow the discoverer something for his skill and energy."

Suddenly, after a silence, the doctor said: "Jim, you 've got to stop eatin' tobacco. It 's behind the times and it 's unwholesome. Now, I don't want you to surrender any good traits, but that 's an American habit you can do without. For heaven's sake, stop it!"

Jim was astonished and grieved. "Mebbe you 'd like to have me wear a collar that buttons at the back?"

"I don't care what kind of a collar you wear, provided it 's clean; but this everlasting spitting is intolerable. It 's unsanitary, and it does you harm. You can get all the nicotine you want by smoking. If you got to eating a plug o' tobacco while talking with our investing earl, he 'd go home in a hearse. It won't do. Keep the hat and the miner's boots and the wool shirt,— they are useful,— but leave the plug-tobacco right here."

"Oh, anything at all," Jim said, ominously gentle. "What else?"

"And don't get too much interested in the girls you meet over there. Maidie 's got a wife picked out for you right here in the Park."

The doctor cut across corners and raced between cable-cars and drays, during all this admonitory talk, without haste or confusion, because native to it; but the mountaineer visibly perspired in his apprehension of "trouble."

"Don't hurry so, doc. Give a feller time to look around."

Ultimately the doctor led his guest and partner down a long flight of steps into the comparative safety and quiet of a great railway-depot, and when they were comfortably seated in a suburban car, he changed the subject by asking abruptly:

"Where 's Kelly?"

"Gone to the Klondike."

"You don't say! Kelly was too old for that. Jim, there was a great man. Discovered more veins of ore and made less out of them than any man in the mountain. Glover go with him?"

"No. Hank married, you know."

"No! Whom?"

"A widow from St. Paul. She was n't ex-

actly in high-toned society, but she was as good as Hank, so I 'm not kickin'. She was sober, and that 's more than you could say of Hank Glover — ordinarily."

"Drink beat Hancy, too."

"Sure."

"Well, Jim, that is n't your trouble, and I 'm glad of it. That won't beat you on this trip. All the same, watch out they don't down you with some new breed o' drink. They 'll be for drawing absinthe or some other green liquor on you. Go by on the other sidewalk."

"Oh, that 's all right, old man; don't you worry. The feller that does me up over there has got to keep guessin'. I 'm goin' to kick every bush before I camp down by it. No varmint gets the sneak on me — not if I 'm sober, and I generally am."

"I know, Jim, you can take care of such things all right. But girls are your weakness, old boy. You 're too good-lookin' not to get a bid. Turn 'em down — beware of them; wait till you get this deal through and get back to Aspen Park."

"If tickets was as cheap as advice it would n't cost me a blame cent to get there,

would it?" retorted Jim, musingly, looking out of the car-window at the maze of railway-tracks.

The doctor remained unmoved. "Wait till we strike Maidie. Then you *will* have advice — in car-loads."

"Oh, well, advice won't do me no hurt if I don't follow it, I reckon."

The two men understood each other perfectly, for they had camped together on the trail, months at a time, in the loneliest parts of the Rocky Mountains. Jim was always picking up pieces of "float," while the doctor had eyes only for signs of sheep and grizzlies. When together they talked in the rapid, syncopated, picturesque vernacular of the plains; but Jim had a country-school education, and Ramsdell was a graduate of an Eastern university, and had taken a degree in a well-known medical college. He loved the lingo, the life, and the dress of wild America, to which he returned every year with the abandon of a man who fears to lose something large and fine and sane out of his life. When Jim found his big mine on the Grizzly Bear, just above Wagon Wheel, he wired the doctor to come, and Ramsdell went. Since then

they had put every cent they could spare into the development of the mine. When he reached the limit Ramsdell wired Jim to come to Chicago, and Jim came by the next train. Brothers could not be more intimate, more dependent than they.

The doctor slyly looked at his partner with pride and satisfaction. Jim never looked handsomer, and there was some hint of the wild country in everything he did, in the set of his hat-brim, in his broad, strong hands, in his long brown mustache, and in the swing of his legs.

"You fellers here walk for a business, don't you?" remarked the mountaineer as they got out of the car in Aspen Park and started up the street. "When *we 're* in business, we ride a cayuse; when we walk, we saunter. You don't give a man time to look around and see what 's rampin' down on him. Maybe an elephant might be surgin' round the corner — *you* can't tell."

As the two men approached the corner of the third block a very handsome woman in a black gown came on the low porch of a pretty cottage to welcome them. She was large and graceful, her flesh was like ivory,

and the guileless candor of a child was in her big brown eyes. It was plain that she worshiped her husband.

After a quick and hearty kiss Ramsdell turned, his eyes shining. "Maidie, this is my partner, Jim Matteson."

Mrs. Ramsdell put her hand in Jim's broad palm with a smile that went deep down into the lonely man's soul.

"I 'm glad to meet you, Mr. Matteson."

"Oh, don't 'mister' him, Maidie."

"Call me Jim," said the young miner.

She smiled archly. "May I?"

"Why, sure; everybody calls me Jim, except doc, who says 'James' when he wants to rile me. I never was called 'mister' in my life."

"Well, then—Jim, you are welcome," said Mrs. Ramsdell, with just a little hesitation before his name. "Come in at once; dinner is quite ready to serve."

Jim was profoundly impressed by his hostess, and said so to Ramsdell as soon as they entered his room.

"Say, doc, if you could locate a claim with the same success— Why, durn it, man, you 've got the handsomest woman in seventeen

counties. Let me look at you again." He laid hands on the shoulders of his smiling host. "I reckon I undervalued your good looks. Of course I always liked you — you rode well, and you held a gun pretty fair; but, say, I did n't think you could do a thing like this. Any more where she comes from?"

"Lots of 'em. You 'll have one beside you at dinner — my wife's niece. She 's listened to my talk about you till she 's crazy to see you. Oh, you 're in for it, pard."

Jim was seized with a sudden panic. "Oh, Lord! Say, lend me your razor. My chin is all brussely."

"Oh, you 're all right, son! Brace up. You must get used to guileless girls in low-necked gowns, and to six-course dinners, too. They 'll make a dead-set at you in the East."

"I begin to weaken right now," replied Jim, dolefully. "I 'm not fitted for it. I can camp down in the rain and cook a hunk o' bacon on a forked stick all right, but I can't kie-to in a parlor worth a red cent. I 'm sure no account on a carpet."

The doctor was relentless. He dragged Jim down to the parlor and introduced him to Miss Bessie Blake, a very pretty girl with

timid eyes, who gazed at Jim in wonder and admiration, while he looked at her in awe. She was very fair and flushed easily. There was a little wavy strand of her red-gold hair falling loose over her temple, which gave him a troublesome desire to reach over and put it behind her ear, where it evidently belonged. She carried also a little black patch on her chin, which he thought concealed some wound on her delicate flesh.

"Oh, we 've heard so much about you, Mr. Matteson," Bessie fervently began.

"Nothing bad, I hope."

"Call him Jim," interrupted Ramsdell, with mischievous intent to confuse the girl.

Jim ignored his partner's suggestion this time. "I wish I 'd 'a' heard more about you; I 'd 'a' come on sooner."

The doctor shouted: "Not so bad for an old pancake-turner! I told you!"

He turned triumphantly to Mrs. Ramsdell, who rescued Jim by saying, "Dinner is waiting," and led the way out into the dining-room, where an exquisite little dinner-service was spread. Jim felt like a saw-horse, and his hands were like pack-saddles as he sat down, and he was flushing and chilling within. How-

ever, he did not show his embarrassment, but remained deliberate, watchful, and outwardly at ease, his handsome face set in stern lines. The women communicated their admiration of him by means of significant glances which Jim did not see, and which the doctor most thoroughly enjoyed. Jim was quite up to the doctor's report of him.

"Well, Maidie," Ramsdell began as he served the soup, "you must prepare Jim for his fate. I 'm sending him to London."

"To London!" The wife was amazed.

"Oh, how nice!" said Bessie, with shining eyes fixed on Jim.

"When do you go?" asked Mrs. Ramsdell.

"To-morrow — if my grit holds out, and the doctor don't change his mind."

"How perfectly delightful!" exclaimed Bessie, impulsively. "How I wish I were going, too!"

"Well, Bessie!" exclaimed Mrs. Ramsdell.

The girl flushed in an agony of confusion. "Oh, you know what I mean, aunty," she cried in appeal.

"We know what you *said*," remarked the doctor, who was a remorseless tease. "It seemed a little precipitate, to tell the truth."

The girl turned to Jim, who was also warm, but by no means confused. "You won't mind what he says, will you, Mr. Matteson?"

"Not a bit," he sturdily replied. "It 's none o' his business, anyhow." Jim's words were blunt and homely, but his tone gave the girl relief and pleasure. "I wish somebody I knew *was* going along."

Mrs. Ramsdell helped them both by saying, "Have you never been abroad?"

"Never."

"You 've been in Chicago before?"

"Oh, yes, in a way. I 've come in with cattle two or three times. But I don't know much about the town. I never was out in this part before."

"What are you sending him to London for, Willard?"

"To rope a cottonwood stump, my dear. Wives should n't ask too many questions on such subjects. I 'm sending Jim out after fire-wood; in other words, Jim has got to sell some stock in our mine."

"Have you thought about your boat?" asked Mrs. Ramsdell. "Which will you take. The *Concord*, I suppose."

"They 're all alike to me," he replied. "I jest as soon die in one as the other."

"Are you a bad sailor?"

"Bad sailor! Why, bless your heart, I 'm not a sailor at all! I never was in anything bigger than a canoe in my life."

"Anybody that can ride a pitching bronco ought not to get queasy when a steamer rolls a little," said the doctor.

"What kind of a thing is a pitching bronco?" asked Bessie.

"It 's a horse with a calico-colored hide, a bad red eye, and a habit of walking on his ears," the doctor replied.

"Oh, how funny!" said Bessie.

Jim faced her gravely. "Yes, it always is funny to the feller lookin' on. A man on a mean bronco is a circus. I 've heard folks don't get much sympathy for bein' seasick, either."

Mrs. Ramsdell turned from a low-voiced order to the servant, and said: "Willard, have you told Jim what ship to take and what part of the ship to get his berth in?"

"Now it 's coming, Jim — cure for seasickness and all."

The young wife colored a little. "Now,

Will, hush! It would be cruel not to give Jim some hints of how to get safely off."

"Oh, I don't know," replied the doctor, in the tone used on the vaudeville stage. "Jim 's bound to be sick. He 's going to cuss me and the ship and the ocean and everything else; but that 's what a sea-voyage is for. It 's the best possible preparation for London. Any old sog of an island will do Jim after he 's been on the ocean a week."

"Willard, *do* keep still!" interrupted Mrs. Ramsdell. "You 've spoiled Jim's appetite already. He is n't eating a thing."

"Nonsense; you can't spoil Jim's appetite. He 's waiting to see which fork to take up," said the doctor, brutally. "Take the biggest one, Jim, or the nearest one. Neither of 'em cuts any ice. All the one I claim to know is the little one for oysters."

Jim stiffened again, but manfully stood to the truth. "I 'm not so bad as that, but there are two or three little kinks here that I don't quite savvy."

"Don't lay 'em to me, Jim. I am a plain man, but my wife is n't a bit plain. I keep her down to five courses and three forks, but it is the result of eternal vigilance."

The women turned to Jim and got him to talk about his mine, his horses, his prospecting, and a dozen other interesting topics. His diction became vivid, terse, and powerful, and the women glowed with pleasure. Jim, on his part, was inspired by such eager listeners to do his best.

"Do you mean to say Willard goes with you on these trips?" asked Mrs. Ramsdell.

"He used to. Lately he 's been too busy, so he says."

Mrs. Ramsdell turned reproachfully. "Will, you never told us about these things."

"Why, yes, I did," replied the doctor, "only I did n't tell my story so well, that 's all. Jim 's a poetic naturalist and a naturalistic poet. He sees things without looking for 'em. I 'm sending him to England because he 'll interest them over there, and while they 're listening to his tales of grizzly bears and Indians, he 'll hypnotize 'em into putting money into our mine. Oh, I 'm long-headed. Let me manage this thing, and when Jim comes back we 'll move over on the Lake Shore Drive, and Bessie and Jim can visit us there."

"Willard Ramsdell—you are brutal!" cried

his indignant wife, while Bessie again blushed most vividly.

Ramsdell was quite unmoved. "I 'm an inspired prophet," he calmly replied. "I thought you were interested in having them on good terms," he added, making matters worse.

He had succeeded in spoiling the evening by throwing a palpable constraint over the young people, and though the women did their best to get Jim back to his former vigor and freedom of narrative, he remained monosyllabic in his remarks.

He went to bed, however, with a feeling of having passed one of the most profitable evenings of his life. Miss Blake's clear, candid glance and ready smile had pleased him mightily.

"I wonder how she *would* stand the climate of Colorado," he thought, with a shy inward smile. "Mebbe I 'll ask her one o' these days, after I sell the mine."

Bessie was a vigorous girl, and made a blooming breakfast companion for Jim, who sat opposite her at the table next morning; and while Mrs. Ramsdell talked to him about ways and aids to crossing the water, Jim

studied the girl with a curious reflective stare which threw her into self-conscious confusion. He sat like a man in a dream, eating mechanically, hearing little that any one else said, but seeing and hearing all that Bessie did or said. Her like he had never seen at close range.

He had very little further to say to her till the time came to say good-by. She stood beside Mrs. Ramsdell as the latter said:

"Write to us, won't you, Mr. Matteson? We 'll be eager to know how you like London. Tell us all you feel."

"Oh, do!" cried Bessie.

"All right," said Jim. "I 'm a purty poor hand with pen and ink, but I 'll do my best. I 'd like mighty well to hear from you," he added, looking at her intently. Then with a final "Good-by—till next time," he left the room.

Bessie turned to Mrs. Ramsdell after he went out, and said: "I think he 's wonderful. I wish I could see him 'do' London."

"I 'm afraid it will spoil him," replied Mrs. Ramsdell.

"I don't," Bessie stoutly declared. "He 's too big and true-hearted to be spoiled by anything."

II

THE BIG CANOE

JIM left Chicago in the evening, and did not see much of the country till he was well on into Ohio next day. There he was amazed at the number of towns. No sooner was the engine done ringing for one than another flashed into view. The State seemed all low and marshy to him. He had the feeling of one who is descending to the base of the world. The sea-level was to him merely a fixed point from which to measure the high places of the earth. That people lived there he now began to realize, and he wondered how they endured the damp, close air. He understood also that the whole trip was a descent from the high country he loved so well.

He saw very little of New York, for it was late when he arrived at Jersey City, and he took a car at once for a famous old hotel on

Broadway. He breakfasted at eight, and immediately thereafter boarded a car for the dock. From the vantage-ground of the back platform he surveyed the town. With the offhand freedom of a countryman he remarked upon the age of the buildings and upon the primitiveness of the horse-cars which tinkled along on the cross-town circuit.

"We would n't ride in such a car in Wagon Wheel Gap," he said to the conductor, who defended the city vigorously.

"We 're putting in electricity," he replied. "I 'll admit these cars are pretty 'yaller,' but we 're layin' 'em off as fast as we can."

"How close do you go to the big canoe?"

"The what?"

"The steamboat. I 'm on my way to take the steamboat for England."

"What line?"

"Well, now you 've got me. I did n't know there was more than one. The name of the boat is the *King George*."

"Oh, the Red Cross Line."

"I believe that is her brand."

"Oh, that 's very near. You 're from the West, I guess?"

"I am, and I wish I was back there this

minute. I never was so lonesome in my life."

"Oh, New York 's not so bad when you get used to it," replied the conductor, good-naturedly.

"Oh, I could stand New York all right; it 's the ocean that makes my brussles point the wrong way. It 's a great big proposition for a land-crab like me."

As he neared the boat Jim's blood quickened a little at the great confusion and clangor going on in the "station," as he called the wharf. Cabs were clattering up to drop women and children and bags and bundles. Express-wagons, piled high with trunks, were lined up, waiting a chance to unload, while men with hand-trucks were running about like ants, fastening on baggage with intent and unhurried action. The clatter of their trucks was like the sound of a storm. Cries and commands echoed. Out of the vast, dim cavern-shed two or three doorways opened to the left, and, approaching them, Jim found what he called "chutes" leading to the ship, which towered in majestic impassivity beside the wharf. It had the bulk of a mountain and the lines of a Siwash canoe.

The mountaineer swore softly as he comprehended the bigness and the beauty of the boat. He had expected something grand and powerful, in harmony with the sea-waves it had to fight; but the reality was far beyond his conception of what it should be. For some time he stood about watching the people stream up the gangway. There seemed to be hundreds of them, all happy, well dressed, and for the most part young. Afar down appeared other crowds of poorer-dressed people. "The second-class passengers, I reckon," he remarked to a man with a couple of small children.

It was all vastly interesting and confusing to a man of solitudes, but, after referring to his card of instructions from Mrs. Ramsdell, Jim had a blue label pasted on his trunk, hired a deck-chair, and got his valise into his stateroom, which turned out to be a little smaller than a miner's dugout, and not much bigger than a coffin. This ended his preparations, and settling down on the edge of his "bunk," as he called it, he faced the emptiness of the moment. A great void seemed to settle down over him. For eight days he would have nothing to do but eat and sleep, and the out-

look was appalling. He was frankly homesick right there, and would gladly have laid down his hand — and would have done so had he been "playing it alone," but there was his partner and the little girl.

He took a turn about the boat, which was to him actually "palatial." The music-room, the stairways, the dining-room, were comparable in their glory to the hotels he had seen in his occasional visits to Denver and Chicago.

"It 's all pretty rich for my blood," he thought; "but it don't last long."

Eventually he drifted out upon deck, and stood observing the excited passengers, who swarmed restlessly about, surrounded by throngs of friends bidding them good-by.

"They 're all too mighty slick for any good use," was his inward comment; "but the girls are sure-enough blooded stock."

A tall woman standing beside him had a big bunch of roses in her hand, and their odor came to his senses as if it were a part of her own regal beauty. Many of the other women were to him as artificial as colored fashion-plates. They possessed curious little affectations of voice quite new to Jim. They stood

about in chattering groups, surrounded by young men almost equally "smooth."

"Never done a stroke o' work in their lives, I reckon," said Jim to himself.

However, in the midst of these excessively well-dressed people there were men who had the manner of business agents, and one or two of them looked as though they might be from the West or South. Jim determined to collar one of these, by and by, for the sake of an acquaintance — some one to talk to.

As he drifted toward the back end of the boat he came in close sight of the second-class passengers. "There," thought he, "these are *people*. They 're human. That 's where I should be — save fifty dollars, too." He hung about this end of the boat, feeling distinctly less lonely as he listened to the talk going on among them.

They acted like "folks." They wept, and shouted affectionate incoherences from boat to land, and the eyes of many of the women were inflamed with tears. Some of them sniveled and were not ashamed, and whole families set up a wail as the gang-plank began to be drawn off. Jim could understand such people; but those "smooth ones" forward

were alien, quite alien. Where work was, where heads were grizzled and backs bent, there Jim was at home; but these finely gowned, cold-faced women he could not comprehend, although their beauty appealed to his highest taste. One scornful creature seemed to be holding a reception like a political candidate at a country fair. She was surrounded by men with arms filled with roses, and her manners were those of a queen.

At last the clangor of the gong started these groups into tepid embraces and polite kisses. They all parted gracefully, without red eyelids or grimaces of uncontrollable grief. One by one they passed down the runway waving their gloved hands, while the outgoing ones took their places at the rail to wave them adieu with dainty handkerchiefs. Singularly enough, all the prettiest girls stayed in New York, or so it seemed to Jim; only the plain ones and the old women remained on board. He was astonished to see how few people of any kind remained. "I reckon they 're like me," he thought. "Like to make a bluff at going, but mighty glad to get off."

Slowly, stupidly, majestically, the great craft sidled, slid, and edged away from her

moorings, churning the water into foam with her spasmodic efforts at getting under way, while the throng on the wharf cheered and waved hats and handkerchiefs. Pale and tearful faces were uplifted here and there, the voices sounding faint and fainter; and at last there was silence on the boat, and the close-packed wharf looked like a dark-purple robe, with flecks of terra-cotta where the bared foreheads of the men appeared.

The ship, once in good steering way, began to utter breath like a powerful but reluctant draft-horse. The water began to hiss away from her black sides, and the quiver of audible effort ran through her vast bulk. She was warming up for her long run across the gray floods, resolute and wary.

As the land of his flag fell away into the midst of the sky-line, leaving only the vivid sun and the shining sea, it almost seemed to Jim as though he were again on the alkali plains of Utah. The dazzling light, the low horizon-line, the enormous sky filled with sparse clouds, made up a world like that where a cloudless heaven forever arches a changeless desert. The sky did not seem strange; it seemed natural in beauty. At the same

time it reminded him of the splendors he was leaving behind. All that was familiar and trustworthy was back there, where the sun was sinking. To the east lay the unimaginable, the dangerous, and the wearisome; and a feeling of timidity came over his bold heart: this water world was dangersome.

In a short time a great change took place in the looks of the passengers. Men appeared in short coats and sailor-caps; the women grew gayer, plainer, more human, as they laid aside their street dress and came out in deck costume. A rush to secure the best seats in the dining-room took place, and the choice locations for chairs on deck were being taken up; but Jim scorned to take any part in these scrambles, and accepted with resignation whatever came his way. "I reckon I 'll get my share someway without rushing for it," he said to a steward.

There were stewards for chairs, state-room stewards, stewards who presided on deck, over the boats, over the baths. They were all distressingly courteous and ready to help anybody and in any way — for a consideration, as Jim well understood.

The dining-room was very gay that night,

every seat being filled. Jim found himself between two old women and opposite two children. Being in no mood to talk, he cared very little who his seat-mates were, but ate a good meal, and went up on deck to watch the sun go down. The west was filled with great, heavy April clouds, piled in masses like mountains, and Jim's throat closed tight with a homesick ache. When he looked to the east a feeling of awe fell upon him, as he realized that the ship was rushing each moment away from land into a gray sea.

He stayed on deck until the sea grew dark, musing more deeply on life than ever before. He had a deep-seated feeling that this trip marked an epoch in his life, but he had no foreknowledge of success. On the contrary, he perceived in all its fantastic bulk the folly of sending an old pickax like himself on such an errand.

As he got out of bed next morning he felt queer. He had slept well, and until a few moments before rising was vigorous and happy; but as he stood before his mirror a giddy and joyless feeling swept over him. His solid footing was gone. The boat had a complex movement — not violent, but diffi-

cult. As he went down the corridor he staggered like a drunken man, and the close air of the passageway ran into his veins like poison.

"Great snakes! I'm in for it!" he groaned as he returned to his bunk. "I 'm sick as a horse first crack out o' the box."

He was. His stomach closed up like a rubber bag, and for four days refused all nourishment, rejecting even a drop of water. It became a place of burning and of trouble. For four days and four nights he lay in his ill-smelling little room, as querulous as a babe, while the steward and the ship's doctor worked over him with perfunctory sympathy. They tried him with sedatives and cordials and cathartics and bromides, all to no purpose. His poor digestive sack rejected them all. Each hour of agony seemed a day, each day a month, each night a year. To add to his suffering, his companion, a fat traveling man, snored, and there were times when Jim's wrath became maniacal. He rose once and clutched the sleeper with a hand of iron. "Pardner, I 'd hate to kill you, but there are limits; turn over and shut up."

The scared drummer abjectly apologized.

for he had a notion that Jim was a "bad man" from the wild West. By day the mountaineer lay utterly alone, hearing the creak and jar of the ship, the tiger-clutch and snarl of the waves outside, enduring at once the agonies of death and solitary confinement, while the daylight paled out of his little cell, and night came to bring new smells and new noises. His bunk was narrow and high, and his blankets regularly rolled out on the floor. The only fresh air that came to him fell upon his face, filling his throat and lungs with inflammation; and each night his companion developed new powers of snoring. Each time the ship's doctor came he tried a new remedy, always with the same failure. "Wall, wall," he said, "you are sairtainlie seasick, mon."

As the days wore on, the creak of the ship became as great a torment as his inflamed stomach and aching head. He could hear the water slash and churn like brine in a barrel, and that wore upon him also.

"Curse the idiotic thing, won't it never let up!" he groaned as the doctor bent over him in genuine pity on the third day.

"Keep your heart, mon; ye 'll soon be over it."

Once the mountaineer staggered up on deck and looked out on the cold gray sea; but as he felt the graveyard chill of the cabin, he crept back to his dank, dark hole — it was less cheerless than the upper ship. For comfort he fixed his inward eyes on the brilliant sun, the splendid peaks, the singing streams of the high country, and he fairly wept with agony of longing.

"If God lets me live to see old Ouray, I never 'll leave it again."

He could not think of food, not even of toast, without loathing. The merry clangor of the bugle calling to meals came to be repulsive to him. It mocked at him, voiced the indifference of those who were sea-tested, and it belittled him. The world of water became absolutely hellish in his eyes. What a fool he had been to leave the springtime, the growing grass, the fresh winds of Colorado, for this! Lying there, he felt his utter helplessness to do the work demanded of him.

There was no place on the ship to rest or get warm. It was an enormous ice-box plunging through a desolate and senseless waste of brine. The passengers sat about like dyspeptic ravens, the women drawn and

yellow of visage, the men savage and sullen. The library resembled a parlor wherein a country funeral was about to be held; the sparse occupants were like the first assembly of mourners. From all this Jim was glad to flee even to his ill-smelling little cistern, wherein he knew every knot and every curtain-spot. Would it never end, that idiotic repetition of the same noise, that foolish wabbling? Talk of the dignity of the ocean! It had no dignity; it was the plaything of the wind. But the range, oh, God! the glory of the Needle Peaks, whose waves endure for ages, whose granite walls ride through every storm in steadfast and unshakable majesty! "Let me get back to the high country!" was the cry of his soul. He was comforted by the thought of Bessie, whose timid eyes had studied him so flatteringly. Often the recollection of her smile stilled the curses on his lips and made him forget the chill of his cell.

If he could only have a friend to sit by his bed; if Ramsdell or his wife — or — or that lovely, sympathetic girl — but no; he was condemned to lie alone, counting the creaking of the bolts, the swing of his overcoat on its hook, listening to the passing of feet and

the pounding rush of the waves, mocked by the clangor of the bugle, and made mad by the thought of the long days to come.

Sometimes when his mind reverted to the Ramsdells' cottage and to Bessie, he set his teeth and said: "I 'll have her yet. I 'll carry this thing through, and then—" But he never quite articulated the remaining words of the sentence.

The exquisite line of her pink lips and the gleam of her little white teeth — as white as those of a young wolf — had made the most vivid impression on him. Her dainty personality seemed perfectly expressed in the purity and sweetness of her smile. Feeling his own unworthiness, he hoped to reinforce his cause by gaining wealth. "Oh, I 'm down," he said once, aloud, "but no bones broke. I 'll get up sure when I feel dirt under foot."

At last there came a change in the motion of the vessel: it ceased to pitch and began to roll; and his poor head felt the change instantly. He dressed as quickly as possible and staggered up on deck again. It was just sunrise, and the steward was resetting the chairs for the day. The sun was breaking out of a deeply cloudy sky—the blessed sun!

The ocean, dark green, solemn, silent, was rolling in long swells, over which the boat slid. Water suddenly seemed good to think of, and he drank a huge glassful with feverish eagerness. Strange to say, it passed into his veins, allaying the fever, and he was encouraged to think that the horrible gnawing of his vitals was, after all, just plain hunger. Staggering up to a steward, he broke forth:

"Say, see here, stranger, if you 'd been four days without grub, what would you break in on?"

The steward touched his cap.

"I think, sir, a cup of gruel will do you the most good, sir. I 'll fetch it directly."

"I 'll be mighty obliged," said Jim, and reeled to a chair, with the resignation of a gambler who has staked all upon the red.

The gruel came near tasting good, and in five minutes Jim was able to sit erect. He took a seat in the sun far aft, and with a fixed grinning, like a feeble-minded inmate of the county poorhouse, anxiously awaited the outcome. He grew stronger with great rapidity. The world brightened, the sun came out and lay over him like a golden coverlet. It was the same old sun that shone upon Colorado and

upon Aspen Park, after all. The deep-blue sea began to glitter, and the rush of the waves no longer added to his misery. One by one other sad-visaged men and haggard women crept up the stairway and lay about in chairs, blinking like toads freshly thrown into the light. The bugle sounding for breakfast was less mocking; his gorge did not rise at it, and he determined upon a real meal. As he entered the dining-room the waiter took a personal interest in him. "Good morning, sir; glad to see you up again, sir."

"I 'm mighty glad to be up," replied Jim. "I have n't troubled you much for four days, have I?"

"No, sir; we missed you, sir. W'at 'll you 'ave, sir?"

"Make it eggs on toast; and, say, add a strip of bacon to it — I jest nacherly believe I can eat it."

While the waiter was gone the mountaineer studied the suggestive little corrals in which the dishes were placed in order that the rolling of the boat should not send them to the floor. "Nice way to eat," he thought: "about as comfortable as takin' dinner on top of a 'bus."

The bacon proved to be an inspiration, for it carried Jim back to the trail. It had in it the smoke of a thousand camp-fires, and it cleared away the last trace of his illness. He ate it all, every scrap of it, and desired more, but had sense enough to rise from the table hungry, content to let well enough alone.

Quite at peace with the world for the moment, he went on deck and watched the other passengers as they crawled up like torpid crickets from below, expanding into cheerfulness and spasmodic chirping under the beaming sun. Each woman said, "Is n't it a lovely morning?" and plump old gentlemen put their heads together like couples of fighting-cocks, and held jerky dialogues concerning breakfast and the quality of the cigars which the boat carried. Girls who looked like wax figures to Jim, and who talked in tones as much a matter of fashion as their dresses, began to appear and to walk up and down the deck with young men in very new yachting-shoes and very gay short coats. The day grew steadily brighter and the sea less to be dreaded.

However, it did not interest Jim very much;

it was all too far removed and too artificial for his liking. It seemed to him that to be interested in the sky and the sea, as the other passengers pretended to be, was an affectation; they were, in fact, much more concerned over their costumes. Again he found that the "real folks" were to be seen at the after part of the ship, and standing at the rail, he made some very pleasant acquaintances with hard-fingered old men who were returning to England or Scotland or Ireland on a visit after years of labor in America. They were all hearty and communicative.

As he sat contemplating the sunny sky, which grew each moment more and more luminous and comforting, Jim observed a man with a cow-boy hat, which he wore pulled low down on his head. Jim was interested in him because he dared to wear such a sombrero when every one else wore a cap. Thus far the mountaineer had not spoken a single word to any of his fellow-passengers; but seeing this man almost as lonely as himself, he spoke to him as he was passing:

"Pardner, where did you meet up with that hat?"

The stranger stopped instantly and pride-

fully grinned. "In Denver; I bought it to wear on me ranch, you know," he replied with a strong English accent.

"Is that so! Well, I 'm from Colorado myself," said Jim.

The stranger was very much interested. He was English, but of a peculiar confiding sort that one occasionally meets with.

"Is it possible! Fancy! I took you for a New-Yorker," he said.

Jim laid a finger on the side of his head. "That 's due to the cap. Never wore one before, never expect to wear one again. See here; you don't get the right scorch on that hat. This is the way you want to do it." He whipped off the hat, and struck the crown lightly four times, till it stood up in a peak. "There, that 's the trick," he said, as he placed it back on the young man's head. "It ain't the clear quill, though: the crown 's too flat. I worked cattle myself for five years."

The young fellow was filled with instant admiration. "Where was your ranch?"

"Oh, I took a hand all along the line. I 've punched cattle from the Panhandle country clear up to the Bad Lands, and once I crossed

over to the Pecos, worked there two years, then drifted over into the Lost Park country for two years."

"May I ask how you happen to be here?"

"Oh, I just thought I 'd take a whirl across and see the other side, just for greens, as the feller says. I wish I had n't done it, as Pete Gaven said when he roped the grizzly."

"Are you a cattleman — I mean a proprietor?"

"No; I 'm only a miner," Jim replied curtly.

"I beg your pardon," said the young fellow, who perceived that Jim was not ready to discuss his private affairs. "Here 's my card."

Jim took the card, which presented the name of "Mr. George Arthur Hastings," and cautiously replied: "My name is Matteson — Jim Matteson of Wagon Wheel Gap, Colorado."

The young Englishman became excited. "Is it possible! I 've been there; I was there last October — put up at the Palace Hotel. Beastly bad place, but I stopped a week."

Jim smiled. "My hotel was made out of

popple slabs and set into the side of the big 'draw' that runs just west of the town. I was taking a shy at placer-mining just then."

"You are a practised miner, I fancy?"

"Well, a kind of a one. I 've ranged the hills of Colorado off and on for five or six years, if that makes a man a miner. No, I 'm a prospector; I 've always been a prospector; even when I was punching cattle I had my plans for striking a mine."

"Did you ever really find one?"

"Oh, yes, I 've found mines a-plenty — generally on somebody else's land. I lost one or two because I had n't money to fight contests." Here he rose, as if to shut off conversation.

"I 'm very glad I met you," said Hastings; "I hope I shall be able to talk to you again. Are you to be in London long?"

"Well, I don't know. You see, I 've got a mine to sell, and it may take me all summer."

"How much of a mine, if I may ask?" said Hastings, as if ready to buy it at once.

"Well, it 's a right smart piece of a mine. I 'm holding the half-interest at two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. It 's a good mine all right, all right."

Hastings sighed regretfully. "That 's quite out of my reach, but I may be able to help you, after all. I know some fellows with money to invest. I 'll be glad to introduce you to them."

"Much obliged," said Jim, coldly. "I reckon I 'll hit a hot trail as soon as I present some letters I have."

"Oh, no doubt; but I would like my friends to have a chance."

Jim regarded the young fellow as altogether too easy game. It was like going out to kill a mountain-sheep and having the thing turn and walk right down the hill to you. He began to wonder if the Englishman were not about to work some game on him. He made an end of the conversation brusquely, and turned away.

Dragging his chair far off, he lay out in the sun like a lizard absorbing heat, his eyes on the sky. When he looked at the great clouds sailing through the deep blue above him he could easily imagine himself on the Grizzly Bear trail once more, and the foam which hissed from the boat's rushing prow was not unlike the hurrying waters of the Uncompahgre. The mountain world was coming to

have a beauty which he had never definitely understood before. It seemed that he was leaving it forever as he saw the ship rush into this deep-blue waste hour after hour, day after day; and yet he had no sense of progress. He was in a world without end and without change.

During the afternoon Hastings came round with his sister — a plain little woman, who also had been very seasick. She was nice and sympathetic, and deeply interested in all the stories he permitted himself to relate about the wild country. She was quite as homely as anybody's hired girl, but Jim liked her because she did n't pretend to either style or beauty.

His mind dwelt more and more on the girl in Aspen Park, who had blushed so furiously at the doctor's hectoring. He was not accustomed to girls who blushed, and Bessie's color took hold of his fancy. He wished he could see her in comparison with the girls sauntering about the deck. She was so much more simple and modest and — and nice: that was as near as he could come to phrasing her charm.

Aside from a little speech occasionally with

Hastings and his sister and two or three of the second-class passengers, Jim walked about as silent as an owl in daytime. The boat continued to roll, but less violently. The waves, big, smooth, and colored like smoky topaz, came on from the side, and the ship seemed to slide over them without effort. The passengers did a great deal of foolish walking up and down the decks. Jim, who had never footed it for exercise, was irritated by this promenading. It is doubtful if he would have consented to walk with the prettiest girl on board. To walk for pleasure or for exercise was, to men of Jim's world, evidence of unsound mind.

He brooded a great deal on the strangeness of the plan which had flung him, a man of camps, mines, and cayuses, into these singular surroundings. "It 's enough to loco a government mule," he muttered to himself.

A young girl seated near him turned her head to the young man in the chair beside her and laughingly replied to a question: "Oh, I shall go down to Rome in May. London is impossible till June; so is Florence. I think I 'll spend January and February in Egypt or Tunis."

Jim looked at her with wondering abstraction. She was about the age and "build" of the Aspen Park girl, but she was a long way from having the same simple grace. Had he possessed the word *blasé*, it would have risen in his mind, but he had no phrase to express his conception of this singular creature. To him Rome existed only in schoolbooks, and was as remote as the river Styx or Mount Olympus. His McGuffey Readers, he remembered, had pieces of prose and poetry about Rome and Egypt, which the boys used to spout with awe; and yet here was this girl who seemed to be saying, "I 'll just saunter round by way of purgatory and the New Jerusalem, and winter in Rome." Truly the world contained people to puzzle a plain mountaineer. His thought returned to the dainty little woman in Aspen Park, and a singular glow came into his heart at the idea of home, chilled by the thought that all his work and half his journey were still before him.

He became inexpressibly weary of the sea. Its ceaseless slosh, the cold wind, the roll of the boat — everything tortured him. He had nothing to do but think, and thought came

at last to circle, like a milling herd, round and round to no purpose. The hours again grew long — not so long as when he was confined to his foul dungeon, but so long that his bones ached with their slow, deadly drag. It was not the sweet loneliness of the trail; it was inescapable monotony.

His loneliness threw him often in young Hastings's company, and he could not help running into talks that were almost confidences. He had never been so long separated from friends before, and it produced in him a bitter melancholy and a startling sense of weakness. He tried to be civil to Miss Hastings, but found it difficult, for she had an irritating habit of interrupting, and often threw him off the trail by her unexpected remarks.

"Only fancy!" she would interject inopportunely, her big gray eyes fixed in a strenuous stare on his face. Her astonishment was quite usually at some matter-of-course point in his tales. "Fancy that!" she would say to Arthur, or, "There! he can tell where to go by the snow on the peaks. Is n't it wonderful?" when the point of his story had nothing whatever to do with following the

trail, which was a mere commonplace, like saying, "I went down the street."

Once she interrupted him to say: "I suppose living is very dear so far from New York?"

Jim paused. "Well, that depends on what you eat. There 's always a little game even high up, and bacon and beans are cheap."

She stared fixedly. "Fancy living on bacon and beans! Do you have no bread?"

"Oh, yes; sinkers."

"I beg pardon?"

"Sinkers — dough-balls — skillet-bread. Flour and water and baking-powder mixed and baked in a kittle or gold-pan."

"I know!" cried Hastings. "I 've seen the cow-boys baking it."

"Bread in a skillet — fancy that, Artie!"

Jim grew irritated. "That 's not the point. What I was saying was, even after you find the 'float' you may spend weeks hunting for the lode," etc. He never was quite able to complete his story when the sister was present, and ultimately he avoided her.

Hastings himself developed much admiration for the mountaineer. "You must let me see you in London," he said several times.

"I 'll put you down at my club; and then, the governor will want to see you in the country."

Jim had no idea of what was involved in being put down at a club, but he consented. "That 's mighty white of you, old man, but I don't know where I shall make down."

Though still weak and ill, he could not bring himself to go to his room during the day; but as night came on, and his bones ached with the weariness of waiting, and his brain grew numb with the monotonous swirl of his thinking, he crept down the stairs again like a lame dog, weary and downcast. That close, ill-smelling little den came to seem worth while as the sea grew dark, just as a gully in the plains, or a hollow in a rock beside the trail, used to develop a wondrous homeliness as the cold dusk fell upon him and his horse.

His release from pain was of short duration. The gray-green liquid over which the boat rolled began again to boil and hiss and swell, and the ship returned to its old tricks, and creaked and slid and side-stepped, and rose and fell like a teeter-board, and up-ended like a rearing bronco, and pitched like a mule, nosing deep down into the gloomy hollows

between the waves. Jim went flat on his back again. "My heavens! won't it never end?" he muttered, and in the semi-darkness of his room he lay in disgust too great for any words.

At last in the middle of the night he woke with a start, thinking himself in his shack beside the Grizzly Bear. The vessel was still, so still that he did not remember where he was. Then it began to reel again and shake; and with a sudden chill at his heart, he said, "Oh, Lord! I 'm still afloat." But the sea was growing quiet, and, soothed by the changed motion of the ship, he fell asleep again.

III

JIM REACHES LAND

WHEN he woke the second time, people were calling to each other with a note of excitement in their voices, and he knew that new worlds were to be seen. His room-mate was already on deck, and dressing quickly, Jim followed him.

"Land ho!" was the joyous cry.

On the left, treeless hills thrust themselves boldly into the sea. They were brown, with faint patches of green in their hollows. "That must be Ireland," said Jim. High, gleaming stone towers rose from these eminences — lighthouses, old and new, Hastings told him. Soon little huts could be seen, and stone walls which checkered the land into irregular squares. The cottages thickened into clumps, looking like natural rock forms. At last the fields began to cover the hills, and growing

grain and fresh-plowed earth betrayed the farmer's busy care.

"So that 's Ireland?" mused Jim. "Well, it 's a lonesome country; not a tree in sight."

"Every inch has been harrowed by human hands for centuries," volunteered an old gentleman, addressing Jim and Hastings.

"Poor beggars! No wonder they go to America in swarms," said Hastings. "Still, it 's not so lonely as the plains."

"That 's true," Jim admitted. "But then, you don't look for anything different on the flats."

The tone of the ship's conversation was utterly changed. Into the emptiness of the sea something worth while had been born. Laughter could be heard from all parts of the deck. Field-glasses were focused upon every object which could yield amusement. The mere sight of hills made Jim's blood quicken. That day he ate his second full meal.

A new terror now confronted the mountaineer — Liverpool and the customs officers. He asked Hastings about these matters.

The young fellow seemed vastly pleased to be of any service.

"I 'll put you through," he said. "It 's

quite simple, you know. A couple o' shillings and the thing 's done. You 'll find Liverpool quite like Chicago."

It happened that Jim did not see Liverpool at all. When he came on deck the next morning the vessel was already anchored in what seemed to be a muddy river, the dim shores of which were enveloped in fog, out of which bells and whistles and the rumble of heavy wheels came in ever-increasing volume; and even when the steamer swung alongside the dock, only a row of dingy buildings (which might have been West Chicago) could be seen: all else was hidden by mist.

Piloted by Hastings, the mountaineer found his way into the huge hall wherein the baggage was laid out for inspection. "You want to look after your own luggage and see it into the van; we have no checking system like yours," Hastings explained as he mounted his pile of baggage and bawled for a porter. All about the place, men, women, and children, perspiring, excited, yet resolute, stood guard over piles of bags, trunks, shawl-straps, and hat-boxes, while myriads of porters moved about like deliberative beetles, and fastened upon variform parcels with grimy claws.

Jim "caught on" quickly, and clapping a porter on the back, said: "See here, cap; what 'll you take to get my baggage out upon the railway-platform?" The porter mumbled something in reply and laid hold on his trunks. Jim followed him out to the platform. "Well, I 'll be hanged!" he said as he looked at the cars. "Is this a narrow-gage train?"

"A w'at, sir?" queried the porter, who was used to queer Americans and remained stolidly calm.

"Is this as big as you make 'em? Do they all come this size? Is this the London special?"

"This is the reg'lar trine, sir."

"All right," said Jim, seeing the porter's inability to comprehend his joke. "Go ahead. What 's the next ground-hop? Where do I get in at?"

Hastings appeared at this point. "Put your luggage on here. I 've saved a seat for you in this coach."

"Don't I get a check for my truck?"

"Oh, no; it will be all right. Just make a note of the van, that 's all."

Jim waved his hand at his trunk. "All right; see you later — mebbe."

The porter sidled close to him. "I siy, sir, if you give me a shillin', don't let t' old man see it; we 're not hallowed a tip."

Jim looked round at "t' old man," a fussy, choleric, childish old giant who was bellowing useless orders to the hurrying porters.

"All right, pardner. Wait till I dig up a piece. What 's that? Is that a sixpence? Looks to me to be worth about a dime. How 's this? That 's a quarter, I take it."

"Thank you, sir; much obliged, sir," said the porter, as he sidled off out of reach of "t' old man."

Jim gave his attention to the train, which was a long row of little, lightly built, dirty white cars, like a lot of stage-coaches set end to end. They had doors only on the side, and the seats were exactly like those in an old Concord coach. On one side a minute corridor ran from end to end of each car, but it was so narrow that a broad-shouldered man had to go sidewise, "like a hog to war," as he said.

Jim smiled broadly, and taking from his pocket a circular, re-read to Hastings the words: "In deference to our American travel we have put on a superb corridor-train outfitted in the American fashion. Travelers

from the States will find every comfort on these fine up-to-date coaches."

"Why, bless 'em," he said earnestly, "you could put this pony-train, wheels and all, into the Overland Flier on the Santa Fe or Northern Pacific!"

"It looks small to me," confessed Hastings; "it never did before. But this is not the regular coach, you know; it is quite Americanized."

"I 'd like to see the sure-enough English train," replied Jim.

Meanwhile the excitable little engine far down the track uttered little squeaks of impatience like a restive colt, till Jim shook with laughter. "Is the engine the same breed as the cars?" he asked. "Its nicker 'pears to be narrow-gage."

Before Hastings could answer, the conductor blew a sort of bicycle whistle, and the brakeman began to run along the train and slam the doors shut. Doubling himself up, Jim got into a "stall" with Arthur and his sister. A tall and gloomy old man was already seated by the window, with a plaid shawl over his knees. He looked with disfavor on the newcomers.

"How many does each pew hold?" asked Jim.

Hastings smiled feebly. Jim's humor was making an impression.

"Ten; but it seldom happens that more than six get in."

"It 's for all the world like the stage that goes from Wagon Wheel over to Williams Gulch."

As the complaining little engine drew out into the city, Jim was amazed to find how much like Chicago the streets were. The atmosphere, smoky, foggy, shut close over the ugly roofs and lay along the grimy walls. The people all stopped to look at the train, which seemed to interest them almost as much as though it came only once a year. For nearly half an hour the train wandered through gloomy caverns the walls of which resounded to the solemn tolling of bells — on and on, till at last green fields, flowery trees, and a pale sun proclaimed the end of Liverpool and the beginning of rural England. Jim's spirits brightened. The sight of a tree was medicinal.

A white mist was in the air. The wind was cold, but the fields were deliciously

springlike, and the mountaineer fixed his eyes upon them with great joy. The land was like a garden. It had been plowed and harrowed and sandpapered and currycombed for centuries; that was evident. It was every inch in use; the plow ran to the very door-step of the little brick cottages, and furrows swirled round the buttresses of the small stone churches. Curving roads, as smooth as asphalt, led between fields outlined by hedges. On the green slopes sheep lay scattered, looking like gray boulders. Over all fell a sickly sunlight. A cold wind blew in at the window.

"It 's a good deal the way I expected it to look," said Jim to Hastings. "But, say, your freight-trains cork me up," he broke out as they passed a string of "goods-vans" laden with hay and brick and coal. "They 're nothing but carts — drays. Look at that one carrying coal. Must have as much as a ton and a half on. Look at the tall wheels! Makes me think of a long-legged boy in knickerbockers."

The tall old gentleman in the corner glared at Jim, and Hastings grew a little nervous.

The country genuinely interested the miner.

He studied it carefully. Everything he saw was the direct antitype of Colorado. The little rivers wound through the valleys, as submissive as canals between their carefully ordered banks. The woods were parks, the hills looked like artificial mounds built to diversify a public garden. The hedges were barbered, the brooks walled with stone, the marshes drained.

"This country is too slick for me," said Jim, with a sigh, turning to Hastings. "No place to hide. Could n't build a camp-fire. Think of livin' where you can't set foot outside a road without gettin' into some old woman's garden-truck. There 's a feller sowing wheat by hand! Have n't seen that since I was a kid. It 's all too purty f'r me, too blame narrow and slow. There 's a straw-covered shack — 'thatched' is it? Well, by ging! I did n't expect to run on to that. Used to read about it in McGuffey's Fourth Reader. What if a spark should lodge in it some dry day; or mebbe it never gets dry here?"

"They burn up sometimes. There are not many of them, as you see. They 're passing away," Hastings explained.

The old man, who had been looking at Jim

with mingled curiosity and disapproval, now contemptuously remarked in a nasal snarl:

"If you don't like England, young man, you know what you can do."

Jim smiled. "I do; I can get out. I shall. Don't worry, my Christian friend. I 'm not rooted here."

The old gentleman returned to his paper, and Miss Hastings threw in a gentle word: "If we all wished to live in England it would be very uncomfortable, would n't it?"

"That 's so," said Jim. "I 'd hate to see England all moving into Colorado; it 's getting tame and populous too rapidly as it is."

And then peace fell upon the group.

After a long silence Jim said: "Reckon I 'll have to revise my remarks about this train. It 's shufflin' along like a house afire. It 's little and it 's squeaky, but it gets there."

Hastings pointed out famous ruins and sites of historical happenings, and the mountaineer replied in each case, "You don't say!" or "*Is* that so?" but his voice betrayed no interest. It was of no value to him to point out an oak and say, "Once a castle stood there."

"If you 're bankin' on your age," he said finally, "I can take you to places in Colorado and New Mexico that the Smithsonian sharps say were old when Pharaoh was king down there in Egypt. That 's what they tell *me*. I 'm not insuring it. But I know I 've seen ruined cities where the streets were lined with trails six inches deep in solid rock, worn by the moccasined feet of the people that lived there. And I 've been in the caves in the lava of a volcano in Arizona where the hairy man lived. That 's what *I* call an old town. If you 've got anything that beats that, trot it out."

It was evident that he had no sense of being historically connected with this country, and Hastings was rather glad of it.

The train rattled along steadily, flashing through towns of brick every few minutes, and winding along river valleys wherein ran small sluggish streams, through fields where slow-moving men with teams were at work. The sky began to fill with heavy clouds, and the sun fell but infrequently upon the landscape.

Sitting so, Jim sobered at last, for he began to realize that he was sweeping, as swift as an eagle's flight, down upon the greatest center of human life in the world; and to a

man of solitudes nothing is more appalling than floods of men and women crowded between granite walls. He had no other sentiment about London — its age, its history. Nothing counted but its masses of human souls, its welter of confusing activities.

Hastings and his sister got out at Rugby Junction, after many cordial good words and repeated invitations to Jim to come down and see them at Heathcote.

"Look for me," said Jim; "I 'll come a-rackin' over the divide some o' these fine days and take a snack out of you."

Hastings beamed with pleasure. "I say, now, that will be worth while. We shall look for you. Let me know your London hotel, won't you?"

Jim missed these good people, and after they got out he rode in silence with the old man, who dozed in his corner, waking now and again to clutch at his plaid shawl, looking up each time to see that his bag had not been rifled by the man from the Rocky Mountains. At last London began to loom as a dark presence, and with a warning clang the train plunged into a singular yellow obscurity, and the "trailer" was enveloped in a London fog.

IV

AFOOT IN LONDON

TO be "set afoot" on the plains is considered by a cow-boy to be a dire misfortune, for the reason that he is put at such great disadvantage with the concave earth which spreads out beneath a burning hemisphere of steel and glass. The horseman has weak limbs for walking, anyhow, and Jim was ill fitted to cope with any city, much less with London. His first instinct was to "hole up" somewhere, and watch the dangers go by. He was vastly amused by the wild scramble for baggage which took place after the train drew into the station, and was also being instructed in the London vernacular. The porters, the cabmen, and the ticket-clerks all said "wiy" for way, and "nime" for name. When the porter handed him his valise he said "Thank *you*," and when Jim gave up a piece of money he also said "Thank *you*," and both

phrases were uttered in a voice of insolent imprecation.

Hastings had told Jim to go to the Railway Hotel, at the road's end; and this he did, only to find it "full up." Leaving his trunk in the hall, Jim wandered along the street with an eye for other hotel signs. There were plenty of them. "The Teviot House," the "Dundee Hotel," the "Wessex House," and other names calculated to appeal to the country visitor attracted him. He was particularly taken with the Teviot House, which faced on a little parkway and had a little clump of bushes on each side of the door. Upon entering the hallway, he faced a tall and sleepy porter, who took his valise with a yawning "Thank *you*."

Jim doubled up his back and thrust his head in at a little window where a severe young woman in a black gown confronted him.

"Are you the clerk?"

"I am, sir; yes, sir. What can I do for you?"

"Have you any beds left?"

"Yes, sir, I have one. It 's on the upper floor, if you don't mind."

"Anything as big as my back will do," said

Jim; "I 'm not so particular as I used to be. How much do I bleed?"

"I beg pardon!"

"What 's the price of the bed?"

"Three and six."

"Three and six what?"

"Shillings, sir."

"All right; it 's a whack."

"Thank *you*. Will you sign your name, please?" He signed. "Thank *you*," she remarked briskly, closing the book. "Thomas, show the gentleman to his room."

"This wiy, sir," said the porter, who had also discovered Jim's nationality.

Everything seemed old and very queer to Jim as he tramped up the stone stairway to his room; but nothing was more irritatingly unexpected than that "Thank *you*," to which the porter gave a new wrench as he turned away.

The room had only one little window, which swung on hinges at the side, like a door; and when Jim opened it a savage sound entered. It was like the snarling of a forest of cougars — it was the voice of London! He shut the window hastily, and, being worn out for lack of rest, determined to go at once to bed.

The floor seemed to be in motion, like the deck of a ship, and his brain still pulsated with the plashing of the waves. Flinging off his outer clothing merely, the mountaineer stretched out on the bed, and fell at once into dreamless sleep.

When he awoke there was only a gray light in his room, and the air was heavy. Pushing the window open, he looked out again on the parkway, on the farther side of which great gaudy two-story 'buses were rolling, the big horses pounding along at a swift trot. Across the park in every direction hundreds of human beings were moving like flies, not distinguishably different in any way from the people of New York or Chicago. Dressing quickly, Jim started down the stairs, hungry, and elated because of his hunger.

"Where do I connect with the grub?" he asked of the clerk, who looked at him with uncomprehending stare like a black-bug.

"I beg pardon, sir — oh, you 'd like breakfast, would you, sir?"

"That 's my next intention."

"Step right into the coffee-room, thank *you*."

"Don't mention it," said Jim, not to be

outdone by this English clerk. By peering round a little he found a minute sign, "Coffee Room," on a door, and entered cautiously, prepared for assault.

A chuckle-headed youth in a low-cut vest and "steel-pen" coat, both of incredible dirtiness and shininess, led him to a seat in a small, shabby sort of parlor looking on the park.

"What 'll you 'ave, sir, plain breakfast or meat breakfast?"

"Whichever has most grub into it," Jim replied. "I reckon I 'm due to try a meat breakfast."

"Thank *you*."

"Oh, not at all; I 'll take 'em both if it 'll help you out," Jim replied, profoundly mystified by this general politeness, which had a curse in it somewhere — like a poison-fang in a beautiful ring.

The waiters began to signal to one another: "An American; a jolly queer one, too. Watch him!"

Jim looked round with a feeling of comfort. The windows, which were tall and filled with old-fashioned panes of glass, looked out on a lilac or two and a black iron fence. A

wan sunlight fell into the room and lay exhausted, hardly pulsating, on the floor. At one of the small tables, near him, an elderly gentleman, with thick side-whiskers and a broad, red face, was crumbling a roll into his coffee while reading his paper. Occasionally he bullied the waiter in a voice that was fitted to incite murder, but the attendant remained brisk, handy, unmoved. Jim looked for trouble, but none came. Aside from one or two women at a table in a corner, the room was empty. It was too early for the regular guests.

The breakfast did him a great deal of good; even the jam tasted good. The surging and swinging had passed out of his head, and he went forth into the street ready for all that came. "I need a trail-map first ground-hop," he said to himself, while passing a stationer's. He bought a small guide, and unfolded it on the counter. "Lord! she 's a sure-enough tangle," he said to the tradesman. "No north or south to this thing. Nothing will do but to get the lay o' the land. I reckon I 'll make the river the starting-point — that 's the way I 'd do in a new country. I reckon water runs downhill here same as in Colorado?"

"Quite the same the world over, sir," replied the tradesman, smiling pleasantly.

Taking his course as nearly as possible, Jim set forth, eying his surroundings closely. "I 'll just blaze a tree occasionally; I may want to take the same trail back," he said. The two-story 'buses filled the street, and he could not but admire the big horses as they strode forward, calm yet alert. It was amazing to think that they could drag such immense vehicles. The little policemen in their long-tailed coats had a comical look; but they were on duty, and it was evident that the drivers knew it, for their lightest motion was heeded. "They must carry guns," thought Jim. "They 're too little to do harm any other way."

For nearly two hours he wandered, seeking the river, threading narrow streets filled with screaming children and women moving about like squaws wrapped in shawls, and at last came out upon St. Martin's.

Hundreds of cabs and gaudy 'buses were sweeping along the Strand, which was a narrow street, he found, and not at all imposing. Jim turned to the left, and walked slowly along, seeing everything which took

place. The people struck him as being very small and dark. The women were quite meager and bent. The "stores" were small, the side streets narrow and queer, with big stone buildings in vista.

He had very little sense that the city was old or even foreign. New York would have had much the same effect on him, for he did not approach it with a tourist's bent of mind. He had no reverence whatsoever, and little historic sense. He did n't know and he did n't care what the city had been; he was interested in the present.

He wandered about all the forenoon, breasting the streams of people, and studying the shop-windows. He became exceedingly hungry by twelve o'clock, and stepped into a restaurant near a big bridge. It happened to be a French restaurant, and the names of all the dishes were not only in French, but in bad script, and Jim was quite helpless.

"Make it a beefsteak," he exclaimed in despair. "Make it a big one, with bacon and coffee."

As the waiter brought his change Jim looked up in astonishment. "Is all that gun-metal mine?" he asked severely.

"Your change — yes, sir."

Jim pawed it over. "Oh, all right; only I don't want anybody else's discard trunk-checks palmed off on me. I won't stand for it. That dollar I turned in must have been overweight to bring a steak and bacon and coffee and this scrap-heap. You keep the coppers for luck."

"Thank you, sir."

It was a hard day. He had a queer ache in his legs, and his feet pained him by the time he got back to the Teviot House. He pondered on this feeling for a long time, and was apprehensive of sickness, but the ache in his limbs passed away after he reached his little den, and as he lay on his bed it suddenly occurred to him that he was tired. That singular pain was just simple fatigue. For the first time in his life he was leg-weary. "Haven't walked so much since I was a kid," he said to himself, in astonishment; "and if I know myself, I 'll never break the record again."

Going down-stairs, he again thrust his head in at the window, and said: "Howdy, Maud! can I get supper here?"

"You can 'ave *dinner*, sir," replied the clerk, in calm disregard of his greeting.

"We call it supper out in Wagon Wheel. What 's the damage?"

"The what, sir?"

"Damage — tariff — cost?"

"Three shillings, sir, for dinner. Tea, one shilling. Meat tea, two shillings."

"I guess I 'll try the dinner."

"Thank *you*."

The only seat left in the little dining-room was at the table with a very tall, blond woman, with a sixteen-year-old daughter in short clothes, very prim, very shy, and rather pretty in a stolid way. A boy of fourteen, evidently a son, sat beside the girl.

"Good evening," said Jim, heartily, as he stood beside his chair. "Nice night."

The woman bowed most frigidly, the girl looked down at her plate, but the boy civilly replied, "Good evening, sir."

"That is, a nice night for London," continued Jim, as he unfolded his napkin. The woman pursed up her lips and did not reply.

Jim said no more, although he was suffering for a little conversation, and had the desire to hear the girl's voice. He called for a paper, and read it, so far as he could do so, as it lay beside his plate. The English papers

seemed very dull, very queer, and quite alien to him; indeed, he was delighted to find himself comprehending the words, so foreign were they in appearance. They were largely concerned with lords and ladies, for whom the trailer had a democratic contempt and frank disgust. He had seen a few samples of the English aristocracy out in Colorado, and they had given him an exceedingly unfavorable idea of nobility in general. The other tables were filled with what he called a "job lot" of English and Scotch people, all quiet and peaceful. For the most part they did not see him at all.

Having discovered that he was tired, Jim concluded to go to bed. His first day in London had produced no very orderly impression on his mind. A maze of streets filled with crawling, twisting lines of yellow 'buses; a hurried, unintermittent, snarling roar of carriages; a welter, a chaos, ugly, menacing, grimy — these were the main impressions. The sidewalks were narrower than in Chicago, and the buildings lower. The grim, gray-black buildings testified to a similar use of soft coal. His keen eyes had taken hold of a million minute scenes and incidents which

the Londoner takes no note of, and his brain was as weary as his legs. "This won't do," he said to himself. "Jim, you loafed to-day. To-morrow to hump your back and make a singletree crack."

All night long the beat of the horses' feet sounded through his brain, mingling with the pulsations of the ship, and he rose early, unrefreshed and hungry.

Soon after breakfast he set forth to find some of the men to whom his letters of introduction were addressed. The first on the list was a Mr. Fletcher, the agent for a Chicago woolen firm. He turned out to be a brisk little man who had become exceedingly British in accent and in dress. He was offensively stiff at the start, and treated Jim like a messenger, leaving him standing while he read the letter, after which he said, in very broad English vowels: "Oh, so you are the real thing, are you, Mr. Matteson? Now, what can I do to be of service to you? I 'm very busy at this hour, but of course you know I shall be quite pleased—"

"Where was you raised at?" asked Jim, with startling abruptness.

Mr. Fletcher was surprised into saying, "Cohoes, New York."

"Well, say, suppose you an' me talk United States — no one is listenin'."

Fletcher got red and lost some of his accent as he sharply asked, "What do you mean?"

Jim stepped closer and leaned menacingly over the corner of the desk. "I reckon you savvy all right. Out where I camp we talk as we shoot — nothing fancy, but we reach people. Now, I 've got a mine to sell, and my pardner sent me to you, thinkin' you 'd be some help. You 're under no obligations to do a thing,— not a blank thing,— and I don't want you to hem and haw and side-step with me, not for a holy minute. And I don't want any muslin frills. Either you do us a turn or you don't. Now show your hand like a man. What are you going to do?"

Fletcher grew pale as he looked into Jim's piercing eyes. "I guess I can't do anything for you."

"All right, pardner; that 's talk I can understand. I 'm a little touchy on being 'strung,' even by one of the English 'upper clawses,' and I certain sure did n't come over here to have the lines drawn on me by a mongril dude from Cohoes. Good *day*," he said in conclusion.

In writing about this to Ramsdell, he said: "I never *had* a man rile me worse with the same number of words. For a red cent Id a caved his ribs in. What did you send me up against him for?"

The next man showed no interest at all for the moment. He was a middle-aged physician, with only a slight English accent. He was, in fact, a Canadian. He asked Jim to take a seat, and when he had read half the letter rose to shake hands, saying, "I 'm glad to meet you, Mr. Matteson," after which he resumed the letter. He read it twice before he spoke. His voice was kindly, though his face was quite impassive. "We will see — I 'll consider the matter." He pulled his long gray beard in silence for several minutes.

At last he said: "Have you had luncheon?"

"I reckon we call it dinner in Wagon Wheel. No."

"Then suppose we go out to luncheon and talk it over." He pushed a button, and a butler (or a valet, or something of that nature) with a pair of neat side-whiskers appeared, exactly as in a play Jim had once seen in Denver.

"James, I 'm going out to luncheon."

"Yes, sir," replied James, mechanically.

"I 'll be back at three."

"Yes, sir."

"Tell Mrs. Robertson an old friend from America called."

"Yes, sir."

"And, James—"

"Yes, sir."

"Don't the Australians play at Crystal Palace to-day?"

The man's face at this point betrayed interest. "I think they do; yes, sir."

Robertson turned to Jim. "Ever see a cricket match?" he asked.

"Not when I was sober enough to remember it."

"You shall see one with me. I think, James, I 'll try to get back by half-past two and leave at three. Mr. Harleigh will come at two-fifteen; have him wait."

"Yes, sir."

"That will do."

"Thank you, sir."

The doctor was moderate of movement, but everything he did counted. In a very short time he had Jim in a cab and had

driven to a noted chop-house in the newspaper quarter. It was a fine old place, with dark oaken tables, a sanded floor, and a big fireplace where the customer could see the meat before it was cut and the fire that was to broil it. Jim was pleased to see the red glow of fire once more.

"It makes me think of slapping a chunk of deer-meat on the coals," he said. "I like this old shack. Makes me feel at home. I have n't been warm since I took the boat in New York."

"Americans all complain in the same way of the cold. We like it."

"You can have it."

"How did you leave Ramsdell? I was very fond of him; he was a bright student."

"The doc?" responded Jim. "The doc is all *right* — at least he was till he met up with me and got locoed with my ore-talk."

By this time the doctor had leisure to observe that his guest was not the conventional American traveler. He began to unlimber, and after one of Jim's characteristic remarks he smiled. "Your speech makes me think of old times in Canada," he said. "Canadians and Americans seem very much alike to me now."

"Ain't such a powerful difference in the Northwest; I don't know about the East. You have to look close to tell the Selkirks from the Kalispells."

"I wish you 'd state your plans very fully, Mr. Matteson."

"Call me Jim. Well, here goes"; and thereupon he told his story, without haste and with great vividness of phrase.

The doctor listened gravely, and at the end said: "This is out of my line, but I believe in Ramsdell, and I 'll help you to the extent of my power. I must think it over — and here comes our chop, so we 'll give attention to that."

During the meal he asked shrewd questions concerning the Rocky Mountains, and seemed to be mildly interested in Jim's picturesque replies.

Jim liked him because he did n't say "quite so" and "indeed" to everything he said. His gravity and kindly preoccupation were grateful, too. The room filled up with men,— mostly young newspaper men, the doctor explained,—and the cook at the glowing fire was kept busy. It was all as simple as a ranch-house, and Jim was pleased with it and

wished to remain. "I would n't mind hangin' up my roll o' blankets right here," he said "I could take a hand with the boys at the fire when I got lonesome."

Promptly at half-past two the doctor returned to his office, where two patients were waiting.

"Jim, I want you to meet my wife," said he, ushering his guest into a long, dark room, wherein a small grate fire glowed like a ruby. "Please be seated while I fetch her."

"Surely," thought Jim, "I 'm getting into queer trails."

Mrs. Robertson turned out to be a very handsome woman, much younger than her husband. She smiled very sweetly as she offered her hand, but Jim did not like her: her greeting seemed insincere. She was, in fact, slightly bored at the thought of entertaining a crude young man from the States, and took her seat languidly, saying, with icy politeness, "You are a friend of Dr. Ramsdell, my husband tells me?"

"More than that — we 're pardners."

"Ah! you 're a physician also?"

Jim smiled. "Well, not exactly. I 'm a miner."

"Oh, indeed! That 's very interesting; tell me about it."

"Don't want to invest in a mine?" he asked, with a peculiar smile which took the listlessness out of her pose. It seemed that this young American was making game of her.

"Are you selling a mine?" she asked less sweetly.

"I 'm trying to; it is n't exactly the same thing."

"Is Dr. Robertson investing?" Her voice grew sharper.

"He 's thinking of it."

There was an instant's silence, and the sweetness went out of her lips. "I don't think I approve of such speculations," she said at length. Jim liked her better as she threw off her languid air. "The doctor has made several very foolish investments of late, and we 're in no position to take further risks," she added.

Jim still smiled. "Ours is a dead-sure shot."

"They all are." She was certain now that Jim was a sharper who had secured some uncanny influence over her husband.

"This is the chance of his life."

"That 's exactly the phrase the other men used," she quickly replied.

Jim continued to smile. "They were talking through their hats; I 'm in dead earnest. If the doctor puts in two hundred thousand dollars—"

"You deal in big figures over there," she interrupted, smiling again, but in a different way.

"When we have a big thing we talk to its level. I reckon the doctor could n't do a better thing than bring his blankets right into our teepee. We 'll treat him white."

She was perfectly sure that this singularly handsome young fellow was laughing at her, and that he did not intend to give her the slightest clue to his real business. She turned suddenly to other topics.

"How do you enjoy London?"

His face darkened. "I 'm just a-campin', and hopin' it won't last long."

"You don't like it, then?"

"If I get back to Wagon Wheel Gap I 'll forget London so quick you can hear the glass break inside. All I want out of it now is one man with two hundred thousand dollars."

"You are very frank," she said coldly.

"I was raised that way."

She smiled again. "I hope your candor will not interfere with your business plans."

"I don't think it will. If it does I can't help it. It 's too late for me to begin a new campaign."

"You spoke of Wagon Wheel Gap — what a singular name! Is that your birthplace?"

"Birthplace! Oh, no; no one ever had time to be born in Wagon Wheel. We die in Wagon Wheel, but I never heard of any one being born there."

"How singular! Are there no women and children in the town?"

"Oh, yes, plenty of women; but few children. Camps like Wagon Wheel could n't get along without women. Children — well, that 's different. But they 're comin'. You see, Wagon Wheel broke out only a few years ago, and —"

Mrs. Robertson was becoming interested, and seemed face to face with the elemental life of a mining-camp, when the doctor reappeared. "Well, Jim, I am ready." As he went out, the mountaineer nodded to Mrs. Robertson and said "Good day," with a curious dry emphasis which puzzled her.

"I never held such a singular conversation in my life," she said to her friend Mary Brien, who was waiting for her in an up-stairs sitting-room. "He laughed at me every minute of the time, and I could n't stop him."

"Why did n't you call me down to help you? I like these odd Americans."

"'Odd' is n't the word. He 's incomprehensible," Mrs. Robertson replied, not without pique. "He 's either a savage or a very unscrupulous man — and not at all gallant. Wait till you meet him."

"I shall wait with impatience. You 've roused my curiosity," replied Miss Brien.

Once more in the cab, which seemed ruinous extravagance to Jim, the doctor spun away down the street to a passenger-station, and, with the hustler a close second, hurried down into the bowels of the earth to take the underground railway-train, which was crowded with people. A noisy, dirty, dark, and tedious ride of half an hour brought them to the great open green surrounding the Crystal Palace. The doctor led the way toward a big pavilion in which thousands of spectators of all classes were seated, watching a dozen men dressed like base-ball players,

who seemed mildly active on the green in a game which Jim supposed to be cricket.

Two men with broad, flat bats in their hands stood several rods apart, just before some little sticks stuck upright on the beautiful greensward. The "outs" were dispersed about, a little like the fielders in base-ball. The pitcher, with a long-legged trot and an awkward swing of the whole arm from the shoulder, sent the ball toward the batsman, who faced him. The ball touched the ground just before the batsman, and, eluding his bat, scattered the little sticks. Then the men of the immense assembly clapped hands and cried: "H'yah! H'yah!" "Good boy, Jones!"

"He must have got a twister on *that* one," said Jim.

The doctor looked pleased. "Precisely; Jones has a peculiar 'break' of the ball. That was one of the Australians' best batsmen, too."

Jim studied the pitcher with critical eyes. "His game, I take it, is to fool the striker and smash them little sticks. It certainly is a new one on me. Where do the runs come in? Oh, I see," he said, as the new batsman

lifted the ball into the air and shifted places with his fellow twice before it was caught and returned to the pitcher. "It 's a little like two old cat, a game we played when I was a boy back in Kansas. I 'm purty near professional base-ball twister myself."

The doctor was much gratified at Jim's quick understanding of the game, and said: "You must have played well?"

"I was captain of the cow-punchers' nine from the Cimarron one year. We scooped in all the money in the west part of the State till I lost my catcher—" He broke off to clap his hands. "That was a good stop! Who is the old seed with the long goatee?"

"That is Grace, the most noted player in all England," replied the doctor, his face shining with pride.

"It was a good stop, anyhow."

The doctor seemed to know a good many of the cricket enthusiasts, and pointed them out as they passed to their seats. When the intermission came, he took Jim to a near-by tea-house for refreshments, and there introduced the mountaineer to a couple of gentlemen who began every sentence on a very high key, from which they tumbled to a

period so swiftly that Jim was compelled to say, "How?" and so force them to repeat, while he bent his ear to listen like a coyote hunting mice.

They, too, had been to America. Robertson seemed to select those who had been at some time in the Rockies, in order to bring out Jim's knowledge of the country, as well as to make talk easy and pleasant. Jim met each man with the same keen gaze, and his reticence gave way to no one but the doctor, whose odd fits of abstraction, followed by sudden enthusiasm, interested the keen-eyed mountaineer like the actions of a new sort of animal. Robertson asked a great many questions about Ramsdell, and made an equal number of vague suggestions. It was plain his whole mind was set on doing his friend the right turn.

Jim liked him better and better as the afternoon wore away. His shagginess was not unlike that of some old miner.

Just in the midst of an exciting moment of play Robertson slapped his thigh and said: "Twombly is your man! You must see Twombly."

"There 's the best man on the field," ex-

claimed Jim — "that man Gregory. He 's a stopper for your life. Makes me think of Dan Meeker from 'The Circle-bar,' who played short-stop with me one season."

The doctor went on:

"I 'll have Twombly to dinner on Thursday, and you can talk the mine to him. Bring your papers."

"I 'll come loaded for bear," replied Jim, who had only partly comprehended what Robertson was saying. He continued a most active partizan of the Australians, and insisted that Gregory would win the match. "Your home teams stand toward the young players from Australia just the way Denver does to Wagon Wheel. You need the conceit taken out of ye. These colonials, as you call 'em, are my kind."

On the way home the doctor talked ramblingly about the mine and Ramsdell. "Ever since I got Will's letter I 've been racking my brain to think whom I could interest. I never thought of Twombly till Trumble made that great play — Trumble made me think of Twombly. There are three brothers of them. Alexander is a mining engineer. They 're all rich and ambitious. Alex was

talking of going to the Rockies last year. He 's your man. As soon as I can get him, I 'll send for you. Come and see me any day at one. I lunch then."

"I 'll think of it," said Jim, remembering his discouraging experience with Mrs. Robertson.

Altogether he was much encouraged by the finding of so good a friend as Robertson had already proved himself to be, and set about presenting the remainder of his bunch of introductory letters with good cheer.

One morning some days later the waiter handed him a dainty little envelop. It was from the doctor's wife.

DEAR MR. MATTESON: Can't you come to me on Thursday? Mr. Twombly is in the country, but I hope to have him also. It will give us great pleasure to have you with us. Please let us know at once if we may expect you. We dine at seven.

Yours cordially, GRACE ROBERTSON.

Jim read this note with a great deal of interest. First of all he was interested in knowing that Mrs. Robertson considered it worth while to second the doctor's invitation, and then there was a curious significance in

that phrase, "Come to me." He would have regarded a letter containing such a phrase with suspicion, had it come from some one not accounted for. They dined at seven, it seemed. Why did n't they put it off till bed-time, and just take a snack in the buttery? "However, I can stand it one day if they can all the year round," he said, and sat down and penned this reply:

DEAR MADAM: Im agreeable to coming round if you can stand my ways. Ive eat with my hunting-knife so long, its hard to break in on forks. You cant expect a musketeer to gather honey like a bumblebee. Ill tie up to your hitching-pole about 6:55, sos to have time to unsaddle before grub-pile.

Respectfully yours,
JAMES MATTESON.

This letter alarmed Mrs. Robertson, and she took it to the doctor to read. "What sort of savage is this man Jim?"

He laughed heartily over it. "It 's his way, my dear; don't be uneasy. He 'll turn up in irreproachable dinner-jacket without doubt. These Americans enjoy fooling us to the top of our bent. Jim knows we expect eccentricity of him, and so he lives up to our expectations."

"I expect him to act like a gentleman, and this letter is insufferable."

"Oh, now, my dear, you 're too quick of offense. He meant no harm. You wrote him a polite note in London fashion, and he replies in hunter fashion. As that American comedian used to say, it 's 'hoss an' hoss.'"

"Don't you get coarse, Hugh," his wife replied. "And I hope you 're not going to put your money into any wild-eyed project. What do you know of him?"

"Nothing, except that he 's Ramsdell's trusted partner and—I like him. What does Twombly say?"

"'Another engagement prevents,' etc. I hope you 'll consider well before—"

"Don't worry, my dear. I don't intend to put in a shilling. Nobody will, until the mine is proved to be right."

As a matter of fact, Jim did not look forward with keen pleasure to meeting the doctor's wife. She had interested him more as an opponent in a game than as a hostess; he had enjoyed mystifying her and playing upon her mistaken notion of him, but he was indifferent about her dinner-party. He liked the doctor thoroughly, and it was busi-

ness; but spending an evening with Mrs. Robertson might be toil. The feeling that he was going about the work his partner had set him to do sustained him as he thought of the possible annoyances and embarrassments of sitting at the same table with the doctor's stately and prideful wife.

Meanwhile Hastings, his acquaintance of the sea-voyage, came up to see him, and brought his father, a cautious old fellow who plainly considered Jim a dangerous associate for his son. Hastings the elder was the typical Briton in Jim's mind — short and stout, and exceedingly ruddy of visage, and with no proper use for "aitches" at all. The visit resulted chiefly in a lunch at young Hastings's club and in a certain growth of confidence on the part of the squire. The mine was not discussed.

Jim had the directions for finding Dr. Robertson's house written out on a card which he carried in the sweat-band of his best hat, and when the time came to start he put on his long frock-coat and his wide-rimmed sombrero, and joylessly set forth. He slipped a small but high-class revolver into his hip pocket — a dress-revolver, but by no means a toy. On

the little finger of his left hand he wore a ring hammered out of a nugget which he had found in the San Juan gravel; a Navajo metal-worker had fashioned it for him. It was a cruel weapon on the hand of a strong man. As the evening was fine, he wore no overcoat and no gloves.

He made a handsome figure, not so noticeable otherwise as might be supposed. His easy, quiet movement and his alert and humorous eyes modified the bizarre effect of the broad hat and the long coat, which he wore unbuttoned and swinging, in the manner of "the hills," which is, in fact, Southern. He walked the entire distance, and was "hungry enough to eat mountain-goat" when he arrived — on time to a minute.

James opened the door.

"Howdy do?" said the trailer, heartily. "Is the boss ready to receive the Rocky Mountain delegation?"

James smiled. "He 's waiting, sir. Shall I take your hat, sir?"

"Oh, I guess I can slam it on a peg if you 'll show me the peg. I reckon you 'd call this a fine night in London."

The tone of his voice was such as James

had never heard. It was expressive of genuine good will and natural and simple democracy. To the miner, James was the doctor's hired hand and an honorable citizen; in fact, he rather liked him.

"How do you stand this indoor life?" he was asking when the doctor stepped into the hall.

Jim turned. "Hello, doctor! how are you *to-night?*" He put an odd emphasis on the last word.

"Very well indeed. Come right in; I want to present you to some friends of mine."

The doctor wore a "swallowtail" coat, and as Jim entered the drawing-room he perceived two other gentlemen in similar dress, and several ladies in low-necked gowns of gay color. This little party was unexpected, but the mountaineer did not let his trouble show.

"Howdy!" he said to Mrs. Robertson. "How are you by this time?" His words were strange, but his smile was very winning.

"Very well indeed, Mr. Matteson. Let me present you to Miss Brien."

A small girl with a shrewd, bright face turned toward him.

"Howdy do, Miss Brien? No relation to our William J.?"

"If he 's Irish, it may be," she replied, with a quaint twist of her pretty mouth, which he liked. *She* could see a joke. "We spell ours with an *i*."

"I guess that lets him out," he replied.

Mrs. Robertson plucked at his arm, and he followed her.

"Mother, this is Mr. Matteson; my mother, Mrs. Cullen."

"Happy to meet you," said Jim, pumping at the arm of a grim old woman, who bowed haughtily and kept her lips in a straight line, as though afraid to betray her disgust of him. He was presented next to Mr. Cullen, a very heavy old gentleman with close-cut white whiskers; and last of all to a young man of slight frame, who had very round red lips, a pointed black beard, and a pale face. He spoke in a most singular lisp as he greeted the trailer.

"We have heard very singular tales of you, Mr. Matteson."

"I wonder they let you come out alone," was Jim's harsh inward comment. The singular young man's name was Seargeant, and Jim's mind formulated a pun: "Seargeant! He ain't fit to be a corporal."

In looking about for a seat Jim naturally

took one by the little Irish girl, who had been saying under her breath to her hostess: "Is n't he handsome! I like him, I tell you. Don't dare to send him out to dinner with any one else. He 's utterly unconscious of being noticeable."

She was quite right. Jim was not suffering because of his singularity of dress. If people wished to wear low-cut waistcoats or red trousers or six-inch plaids, he had no objection. He bought clothes to suit himself, and expected others to do the same. There was no trace of awkwardness in his bearing. He recognized no social distinctions, and being properly clothed, accepted the peculiar manner and dress of others tolerantly. Privately he thought Mrs. Robertson a little "flashy." The Irish girl, being little and less florid, pleased him better. He thought her almost as handsome as Mrs. Ramsdell, though her expression was less agreeable and more changeable.

Before he could reply to a question from her, Mrs. Robertson said:

"Mr. Matteson, you are to take Miss Brien in to dinner."

"That suits me, if *she* don't object. If she does, I 'll take her anyway."

"I am perfectly delighted, Mr. Matteson, for I want to ask you a thousand questions."

"Make it two thousand, if you want," he replied, and his liking was made plain to her. He rose, and she took his arm, and they walked out in such a matter-of-fact way that Miss Brien had a suspicion the miner had been playing a part and forgot himself at the moment. His bluff, blunt manner was a constant surprise, for his eyes were gentle and humorous.

"I wonder if he *is* fooling us," she thought.

Jim found himself just opposite Seargeant, who looked at him through his one eye-glass with eager attention. Miss Brien began conversation:

"How do you like London?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, that 's frank."

"It 's the truth. I 'd rather camp where I can hear the roar of the Uncompahgre or the Kicking Horse than have a whole floor in the best hotel in London."

"Kicking Horse — what is that, please?"

"A stream — the purtiest that ever washed gold out of a hill."

"In Colorado?"

"Could n't be nowhere else."

"You 're very loyal to your State."

"Sure; and if I ever get back to it I 'll never leave it."

"Mrs. Robertson tells me you came over to sell a mine."

"I came over to try — that 's different."

The little lady was fast winning his confidence, her eyes were so bright, her expression so alert. She was listening to every syllable he uttered, as if she found him interesting. "Her thinking-box is all in order," Jim said to himself as he began to question her. He left his soup quite untasted when it came, although he was hungry.

"You must n't let me interrupt your eating, Mr. Matteson."

"I 'd like to drink the blame stuff," he said in a low voice, "and save trouble. I never eat soup if I can help it. It 's too thin for me."

"Come and dine with me, and we 'll have things all to your liking; will you?"

He smiled down into her gray, mysterious eyes, and exclaimed:

"Sure thing! Where do you hang out? I mean, where 's your house?"

"It 's over Kensington way. I 'll give you a card before we part."

"All right; I 'll be on hand. You 're my kind. You savvy like a shot. What makes the difference?"

"Oh, I 've been in South Africa; maybe that helps me. My brother has a mine down there. He 's in London now; indeed, the town is full of provincials on account of 'Savage Africa.'"

"What 's that?"

"Oh, it 's an imitation of your 'Buffalo Bill' show, full of horsemen and savages and shooting. Do you know, I believe you 'd like to see it. Will you go with me? I 'll make up a party and invite the doctor and Grace to go also. Will you come?"

"Dead-sure shot. When will it be?"

"I 'll let you know. Where are you staying?"

"I hole up nights in a queer little hotel up near the Northwestern Depot. It 's called the Teviot House."

"Very well; you 'll hear from me as soon as I can arrange a date. And now tell me all about mining and the mountains. The doctor tells me you were a real cow-boy."

"Well, I served my time at it. I began business in eastern Kansas, and worked right through the State, dodgin' all the school-houses on the way, as you can see." He smiled, a slow, curious grin. "I know five or six things about cows and country rock and the trail, but mighty little besides; and the worst of it is, I don't feel bad about it." He paused, and his face grew thoughtful. "I piloted a Smithsonian bug-sharp all through New Mexico one slack season, and we agreed that it was a stand-off. He knew the size of the sun, and what comets was, and how the stars moved; but I had him on the best way to build a fire in a rain, and how to foller a trail in the night, and how to find a spring of water, and the like o' that. He was a mighty reasonable chap, in spite of his notions, and when we come to part, he says: 'Jim, I come out here with some conceit of myself, but I don't know as it 's any bigger business weighin' a star than it is trackin' up a piece of float. All human knowledge is of small account, anyway.' He put it just that way; I remember it all as well as if it happened this morning."

The girl's eyes were very grave. "What did you say?" she asked in a low voice.

"I said, 'Shake; let it stand on that.' And we shook. The trail forked right there; he took one and I took another. I never saw him again. Aside from Doc Ramsdell, he was the best-educated man I ever met. The worst of it was, he was bit by a rattler out in Arizona and died that same summer. I 've never felt right about that. If I 'd gone with him, as he wanted me to, I might 'ave helped him; but—" His voice choked, and he looked away for a moment. "You see, he proved his case: all he knew did him no good in the pinch."

"What are you two so serious about?" inquired Mrs. Robertson across the corner of the table.

The girl gave her a silencing glance, and replied: "Mr. Matteson has just asked me to buy his mine, and I 've told him I can't afford a mine in Colorado and one in Africa."

Jim was touched by her desire to shield him. "You can't have too many mines if they 're good ones," he said. "There 's only one thing better than ownin' a mine, and that 's findin' one. It sure beats any kind o' game-shootin'. To ride along in a mineral belt knowin' you may pick a piece o' float any minute that 'll trail up a big ledge o'

quartz — well, that is about the best fun I ever took a hand in."

"I can understand," she said with shining eyes. "And the mountains and the streams all around! I can imagine it all."

Thereafter Jim felt much better acquainted with the girl, and she looked at him with the frankest liking and admiration. At the earliest moment she said in a low voice:

"I know a thousand things that you don't know,— things that go with what is called culture and the higher education, and cities and ball-rooms, and all that,— but I 'm inclined to think your friend was right. It does n't matter what you know; it 's what you are. I hope you won't like London. You must n't stay here; it 's no place for a big, natural man like you."

He smiled as he said: "No danger o' my stayin' long."

"You must n't. It would be a sorrowful thing if you conformed to our ways. Life will be a dreary business when all the world conforms to the ideals of London and Paris. Go back to your mountains, to your trail, and forget London. It is n't worth your while."

There was an intensity of passion in her

voice, her glance, which moved him deeply. In a dim way he perceived that she was a soul of unusual powers. The little, flushed face, the soft curves of her girlish bust, confused him also. He liked her, but she puzzled him. Her low-cut gown displayed more of her body than was seemly in his eyes; but he was certain she was frank and good, and a thinker as well — one who could meet Robertson or Ramsdell on his own ground.

All this he thought out, sitting in silence in the midst of the chatter, while Miss Brien looked at him intently. She liked his sudden fit of abstraction, but did not understand the cause of it.

"Now you must try some of this duck," she said. "I 've kept you talking, and you 've had no time to eat at all."

"I can eat any time," he replied, and she gladly filled out his elliptical compliment.

She went on: "You 'll like my brother. He will be in after dinner to take me home, and I 'll introduce you. He had a billiard match to play off, and could not come in to dinner. Nothing will make *him* conform since having a taste of freedom. He will be our guide to see 'Savage Africa.'"

"If he 's anything like you," replied Jim, "I know he 's worth knowin'."

After the ladies left and the cigars went round, the doctor began to talk in his queer, disjointed way and to ask questions; but Jim was in a dark mood, and shut up like a cellar door. Young Seargeant's childish lisp irritated him, and the old man bored him with his long speeches about the South African problem. And yet he did n't care particularly to see Miss Brien again. She mystified him, and he wanted time to think her over and find her out. She was like a new kind of ore with surprising combinations of metal and country rock.

Meanwhile the ladies were talking about the mountaineer while smoking their cigarettes.

"Is n't he singular? I saw you were interested in him. Did n't you find him rather primitive?" asked Mrs. Robertson of Mary.

"He 's elemental. I am going to turn him into a novel. We are to see each other again. I 'm to make a date."

Mrs. Robertson laughed outright. "You are his slave, I can see that; but be careful—he 's not the guileless bear he pretends to be.

He was nice with you because you are young and pretty; but there 's something savage in him. I confess I don't know how to meet him. I 'm afraid of him, to tell the truth, and I think he has designs on the doctor's little bank reserve. It is n't quite natural that a man so 'elemental,' as you call him, should turn up here in the midst of the London season with a mine to sell. He may be playing a part in the interests of the Chicago partner. His simplicity may turn out to be artifice. I 've warned the doctor against him."

"I know him a good deal better than you do. He 's all right," replied Mary, with a smile. "He 's the real josey."

"What an expression! Did you catch that from him?"

"Yes — that 's one of Jim's phrases."

"He told you to call him 'Jim,' did he?"

"He did, and I 'm practising for it. It seems a little precipitate when I am out of his presence, but when those big, beautiful, honest, St. Bernard eyes are looking into mine I could call him 'Jim dear.'"

Mrs. Cullen was horrified at these remarks. She had never reconciled herself to the smoking of the younger generation of English-

women, and these dangerously frank words of a young girl were shocking. Mrs. Robertson only laughed. She enjoyed Mary's unconventional moods.

"I 'm not as bad as you fancy," she said to Mrs. Cullen. "I only say what other girls think. It is n't often I have an opportunity to talk to a soul in a sombrero. I only know one who interested me in the same way, and he 'lies low in the level sand,' so far away I shall never plant a rose on his grave." Her voice grew suddenly vehement. "I like *men*, big, savage, hot-blooded, good men, and that 's what Jim is. No woman can corrupt Jim. She might hurt him and make him suffer, but he will always stand tall. Joe would have liked him. I like him, and I see no reason why we should not be friends."

She got up and seized a banjo by its beribboned neck as if to bang the wall with it, but changed her mind, and sat down to pick at its strings. Before she was fairly at it Jim appeared at the door, his face alight with a boyish smile.

"Did I hear a banjo? By the Lord Harry! that sounds good. Let me look at it." He took it from her and gave it a whirl in his

hands. "Why, it 's a sure-enough coon-conjurer." He gave it two or three big, rattling sweeps with his fingers, and the ladies gasped. "Why, this ain't no silver-bowed tinkle-tank; this was made by a nigger out of a blue-gum tree. Where 'd you get it?"

"My husband bought it of a runaway slave when he was a lad in Canada."

"That accounts for it. I 'm just honin' for the sound of one," he said, turning it deftly. "I was raised in southern Kansas, and an old darky showed me how to conjure with the banjo."

"Oh, play, play!" called Miss Brien.

"I 'm going to," he replied.

Jim walked up the street, his mind busy drawing contrasts between Miss Brien and Bessie. Aspen Park seemed a long way off at the moment, and the power of this strange London woman was not easy to elude. He was irritated by her low dress. He could n't imagine the little girl in Aspen Park wearing such a dress in any circumstances whatever. Perhaps a little feeling of proprietorship added to his disapproval.

However, it was good to be understood as

this London woman understood him, and to be complimented as a superior and treated on a plane of good-fellowship at the same time was a new experience. They had been delighted with his playing, and when he left Mrs. Robertson had said, "Come again." And yet he felt as though he had been wasting time.

He received a letter from Bessie the next day, and it gave him a shock. Nothing of the same size had ever happened to him. He knew instantly that it was from her, and yet he held it a long while before he opened it; and when he saw the little sprig of heliotrope on the corner, the neat, odd handwriting, and the opening phrase, "Dear Mr. Matteson," he laid it down and went and washed his hands carefully before going further.

"This is a new lay for you, pardner," he said to himself. "This is no grocer's bill. This is a letter from your best girl."

He settled himself in his chair, and took up the dainty sheets again as if holding some fragile flower.

DEAR MR. MATTESON: Mrs. Ramsdell has asked me to write for her to inquire how you are getting along.

We talk of you every day. The doctor has had a spell of the blues, but Mrs. Ramsdell and I insist you 'll succeed. How do you like London? We are all waiting impatiently for your first letter. Do tell us all that happens to you. You will see everything in a new way, and we want to get long letters from you. I liked your talk about the mountains so much. I 've made Dr. Ramsdell promise to take me with him when he goes out to see the mine again, so you may see me out there. Of course I expect to meet you when you come to Chicago again. You will find London very tame after your wonderful life in the mountains.

Very sincerely,

Bessie R. Blake.

On the bottom of the sheet was a line in a different handwriting, heavily underscored: "*You made a deep impression on Bessie.*"

For half an hour the man of the trail sat in his chair and pondered. Could it be possible that such a girl — Then he thought of his big, unskilful fist. "I can't write a decent letter," he thought. "I 'm stumped right now. If I do write, she 'll laugh at my grammar; if I don't, she 'll be offended. It 's got to be done, but I don't see how. Ain't it slick?" He referred back to the letter, and compared the envelop with the paper, glad to discover that they were exactly the same shade of blue. "Oh, she is a little thorough-

bred. Too fine for an old bronc like me. All the same, that letter has got to be writ."

He tried his pen and his paper, and got squared to his work — and stuck fast, fearing to begin. He could n't call her by her first name, and "Dear Miss" did n't seem right. "Dear Friend" covered the ground, but seemed a little "too previous." It might scare her. He compromised by plunging into the middle of the page.

Ive only had time yet to hunt up two of the men doc put me onto. Im going to make a break for the other two this afternoon. This job didnt seem easy to me when I started, and it aint got no easier since. Its about the lonesomest trail I ever camped down on. Your letter heartened me up, it did, sure thing, and Im on the war-path from this on. Ill tell you right now, I dont want any more sailing in mine. If they was any way round, Id take it if it was forty thousand miles long. When I start back I jump the fastest boat with a bottle of chloroform. First Im going to win out here. Its a tough proposition, but I nail it to the wall. Theys a fellow over here by the name of Rhodes, from Africa. I understand hes workin the British for his own good. I dont know his game exactly. Its something like mine, only on a bigger scale. I only want one or two men; hes doing things like he wanted all outdoors.

Dont you worry about me. Ill make a killing yet and bring the meat right along home with me. Chicago seems like home to me now, with you and the doc and his

wife living there. See you! Well, I rather gamble I shall, unless you take to the woods. I hope youll write again; it kindo puts a streak of sunshine into the durn old town.

Yours respcfly,
JIM MATTESON.

V

A RARE FLOWER OF DECAY

AT Dr. Robertson's suggestion, Jim moved down to the Grand Central Hotel, an enormous caravansary filled with gamblers, rich tourists, touts, jockeys, florid ladies, American salesmen, newspaper correspondents, and every other conceivable sort of adventurer from the Old World and the New. Jim was suspicious of it and all the people in it at once, feeling that danger lurked in every corner. His little stock of money seemed very small in the midst of the paint and putty of this big palace.

Suspicion was not all on his side either. He was immediately "spotted" by the clerk as a man with a "graft" of some kind, but Jim concealed his own uneasiness so well that no one accosted him for a couple of days.

A newspaper man, looking over the register, saw his name, "Jim Matteson, Wagon

Wheel, Colo.," and said to the clerk: "Can you give me a pointer on this Jim Matteson? When did he come?"

"Yesterday. There he is now — the chap in the sombrero."

Jim was walking up and down the rotunda with his hands in his pockets when a small man with a smooth, boyish face stepped up to him.

"Are you Mr. Matteson?"

"I 'm Jim Matteson; what 's wanted?"

"Of Wagon Wheel Gap?"

Jim faced him with a quizzical smile. "Hold on right there, stranger. *I 'm* the man with the gold brick. You 're wasting valuable time."

The newspaper man smiled. "You 're all right, Jim. Say, you must know Ed Brainard?"

"I do. It 's your next throw."

"Well, I 'm Joe McAllister of the Denver 'Record.' Ed and I used to work on the 'Journal' together. I 've heard him talk a whole lot about you, so I 'lowed I 'd sidetrack you for a little interview."

Jim looked at the little man with keen eyes. "Well, Joe, I 'm a long way from home, it 's a

cloudy day, and the formations are all new to me here. But don't you run away with any notion that I 'm easy game. I 'm out for meat myself, and the man that steers me into a dark corner is sure taking desperate chances; now, that 's right."

McAllister writhed in silent laughter. "That proves it! Ed used to spend hours telling yarns about you. He told me of your throwing the white goat over the cliff."

Jim looked surprised. "Did he?"

"Yes; and also about the time you defended the Ute squaw."

Jim 's open palm shot out. "Joe, how are ye? I 'm glad to see ye. When did you come to town? And what 's the good word from the hills?"

They shook hands, all reserve gone. "Come up to my room," said Joe. "I 'll read a letter from Ed that will interest you."

As they stepped into the elevator, Jim said to the boy: "Go easy, son; I 'd hate to surge through the roof."

"Would n't these English lifts frost a man?" asked Joe. "This is one of the best in the town, but it rises and falls with the tide."

Joe's room was littered with boots and underwear which had apparently boiled from an open trunk and mixed with dusty newspapers. A type-writer stood under a window, and a big table, inches deep with a litter of thin yellow paper, filled the center of the room. After rooting through a heap of this rubbish Joe found Brainard's letter at last, and sat down to read it.

It was breezy and slangy, full of personalities and news of the camps, and on Jim's face a shadow fell. For the first time since leaving the boat he was homesick. He could see old Ouray looming like a vast yellow moon in the sky, and he could hear the Grizzly Bear roaring up through the pines of its deep cañon.

"Stop that!" he said suddenly. "You 'll have me layin' down my pack and takin' to the back trail. Stop, or I 'll cut your windpipe."

McAllister laughed in comprehension. "Ed says a little further on: 'I hear Jim Matteson has gone to London to sell his mine. Look him up and give him a lift.'"

"That's Ed all over. He's with his friend clear through till the spring rains; he sure is loyal."

"What about this mine?" asked Joe. "Is that true?"

"I reckon it is."

Again Jim told his story to an eager listener; but at the end Joe said slowly:

"You 've gone up against a hard proposition, Jim. You see, the British public has been worked by so many sharp sports, they won't listen to a man with a good thing. I should say on general principles that you could n't sell gold dollars at three shillings each in England just now. Have you looked around the town at all?"

"Well, yes; I 've cantered around a few — enough to get the slant of the hills."

"Well, let 's go out and take a ride on a 'bus, and we 'll talk things over. I like to look at the old town from a 'bus. A good deal of it has n't any more interest than a railway-dump, but you want to see it."

As they climbed into the front seats on the top of the omnibus, he said: "I 'll help you on this. We 'll make a go of it or set a wheel smoking."

Jim took only a mild interest in St. Paul's Cathedral and the Bank of England and the Tower. The bridges were of more value.

But Joe was good company, and he talked with him very freely, and together they made out a list of good men to see.

"You 're up against a whole lot o' work, Jim, but you 'll pull through. If anybody could hypnotize money out of old man Cramer —"

"I 've got a good thing, but I can't stand expense. I 've got to do my work quick. I 'm like the feller who went down to Mexico for Walters to see about a silver-mine. First he heard of the chap was a telegram: 'On my way home with car-load of bar silver. Wire fifty dollars for expenses.' "

Joe laughed. "You 're all right."

After they returned to the hotel, McAllister introduced him to a medley of people — a renowned jockey, a couple of actors, and several newspaper men. Each new acquaintance wanted to show his good will by treating, and after two or three drinks Jim was forced to defend himself by taking cigars or "fizz-water." They lunched in the Turkish room, and by that time Jim was a little weary of his new-found friend.

He rose on the second morning with a determination to leave the Grand Central.

"It 's a little too rich and too rapid for me," he said to Joe. "I 've lived too long in the hills to stand this kind o' thing. When I was a boy I used to be crazy to have the thrashin'-machine come; but I noticed it wore on me, and the farm-yard seemed mighty restful after it was gone. Same way this durned circus kept buzzin' in my head last night. So I hunt another hole to-day."

He moved a little way up the street into a neat-looking small hotel, which was, in fact, a boarding-house grown ambitious. It had the usual plain female clerk who said "Thank *you*," and a useless porter. The mail was spread out on a hall table, and coats and hats and umbrellas hung about on hooks and racks. The elevator, according to Jim, had the speed of cold molasses, and the man who ran it stepped off now and then to go and mend a trunk or move a bedstead, while the bell rang and the tenants of the upper floors waited in blasphemous impatience. The fireplaces were of the size of cigar-boxes, and the tables were like camp-stools, but everything was clean, and Jim accepted the situation without comment.

His room looked away over the roofs of

the city to the west, and the roar of the Strand came up like angry water. That night, as he sat by his small window and watched the sulphurous light of the sunset fade from the sky, he came close to despair again. Out there to the west was the gray ocean, and it was a long way to Aspen Park and Bessie, and farther yet to the glittering peaks of the Needle Range. He clenched his teeth in resolution to make short work of the task in hand and get back. His was not an impatient nature, but he could not help feeling the futility of his efforts thus far.

From this chilly little room he descended each morning to breakfast on fried soles and steak and coffee, and set forth into the city streets, tracing up clues, presenting his proposition to whomever would listen. At night he returned to his bed like a sick eagle, sullen, silent, lonely. The city did not interest him very much, but he had enough of the tourist in him to feel the need of seeing all he could while it was at his hand, and so when he had a spare hour he wandered away into the jungle of the East End. McAllister called once or twice and took him to his club and gave him lunch and introduced him to

several of his friends, who were pleased with Jim's stories but had no money to put into his mine. They all said: "You 've happened upon London at a bad time. We 're flooded with schemes for Canadian and South African mines just now. Sorry, old man, you know; but so it is."

To these remarks the miner merely said: "I 'm not a pot-hunter. Work goes with this killing, and I down my meat before I go back. I 'm due to win a big chunk, and I 'll wait."

Miss Brien continued to interest him mightily. In all his moments of leisure she filled his mind. She appealed to him in ways quite different from Bessie, and he mentally compared them — to Mary's advantage. She was so vivid, so swiftly sympathetic, so keen to comprehend, that talk with her was a greater pleasure than with any one else he had ever known. "She sure keeps me guessing," he said to himself each time. "She 's a new kind." Her life, her associations, were all strange; so were Bessie's, but, nevertheless, he thought he understood Bessie. Mary had more complex motives, and her trail covered a wider and more wonderful territory.

He was a keen analyst in his way. He did not merely look, he saw, and comprehended a great deal more than he could put into words. Miss Brien made Bessie seem like a sweet child, but did not take from her any charm. They were so different that neither lost by the other's presence.

One day the word was passed from the clerk to the porter, thence to the elevator-man, thence to the chambermaid, that a gentleman had called to see Mr. Matteson, and would he go down to the smoking-room to see him? It proved to be Mary's brother Will, an alert young fellow of rapid speech. He met Jim with a generous hand-clasp.

"Mr. Matteson, I 'm glad to see you. Sorry I could n't have met you at Dr. Robertson's. My sister sends her compliments, and wants you to take luncheon with us this afternoon. It 's a snap shot, but we could n't get the people my sister spoke of, so you are the only guest. In fact, it 's our regular luncheon, and you 're to come without ceremony. Hope you can do so."

Jim soberly replied: "What your sister says goes. Where 'll we meet-up for a start?"

"I was commissioned to bring you back with me, if possible."

"Reckon I 'd better shake off a rag or two. Can you wait?"

"With pleasure."

"I 'll make the turn in about two jerks of a mule's hind leg," said Jim, gravely, as he turned away.

He liked young Brien, and when he came down again he began abruptly:

"You 're no Britisher. You might be from Kansas City or Chicago?"

"Or Cork," replied Brien. "Are you getting acquainted with London?"

"Well, not to hurt. I 've just about got the lay o' the land, that 's all. The formations are so near alike I can't run a trail without keepin' an eye on the sun — and there 's no sun. Have n't seen my shadow but once since I came."

"It is a gloomy old sky, don't you think?"

"I do. It sure puts the cover on anything I ever saw. People here all look like cornstalks in a cellar; that 's right. Where 's the big red Englishman at — the feller we always read about?"

"He 's in our novels — and in the country."

"Well, I reckon he 'd better stay there: people here in London are runty."

As they came out upon the sidewalk young Brien led the way to a carriage in waiting.

Jim stopped him: "Hold on. If it 's just the same to you, I 'd rather ride on top o' one o' these circus-wagons. I can see where I 'm a-goin' to better."

Brien smiled, "Oh, certainly," and dismissed the driver.

As they mounted a 'bus, Jim pointed at a couple of redcoats out on leave, and broke loose:

"Will you tell me why in the name o' Moses your soldiers carry that little red monkey-cap stuck on the side o' their heads? They sure make a man's teeth ache."

"That cap is the button on which the English empire hangs," replied Brien. "It represents our conservatism. It would take a revolution to get rid of that ridiculous wart on Tommy Atkins's head. We have a thousand things just as absurd as that, but no immediate change can take place." He indicated a big building. "That 's Westminster Abbey."

"Aha! I want to know," said Jim, without interest.

"This is the Parliament Building."

Jim was roused. "Say, now you 're talkin'. So that 's where your Congress meets, is it? I 'd like to see the inside o' that building."

"I 'll take you sometime."

"I wish you would; I 'd be mighty obliged."

He looked upward at the splendid mass. "She 's a lou-lou —'most as big as Cathedral Butte," he said, in sincere admiration.

As they rolled westward, the houses grew larger and the people better dressed, and these differences did not escape the keen gaze of the mountaineer.

"We 're in the plug-hat belt now, sure thing," he remarked, as they passed the entrance of the park. A little farther on he raised a shout: "Wait! There 's a flock o' sheep feedin' on the park! Well, now, that heads me off! You 'd suppose them sheep was deef and blind. See 'em feed, and all the racket goin' on around 'em." He paused, and a slow smile crept round his lips. "Makes me think of a pet antelope old Navajo Pete had at Taos. A gang of us cow-punchers was layin' on the grass one Fourth o' July in the edge o' town, waitin' for Pete to fry us some bacon, when up feeds this antelope.

One of the boys lit a cracker and dropped it under the brute's nose. I expected to see Mr. Antelope jump clear over the tent when it went off, but he did n't. He never batted an eye. The feller threw out a whole bunch: the antelope fed on just the same. Then Denver Dan come a-runnin' with a big fifty-center,— one o' these things as big as a candle-stick,— and touched it smokin' and laid it down right plumb under the antelope's nose. It went off like an anvil a-crackin', and when the dust cleared away that durn brute was shakin' his ears and nippin' grass unconcerned as a can o' green corn. You can't always tell about these shy critters."

Will was laughing silently at Jim's quaint yarn, when he rose, saying, "Here we are." They got down at the corner of a fine street which began at the park, and a few moments' walk brought them to the door of a big gray building, which stood facing a little green garden.

Jim looked up at its façade, and said slowly: "She 's big as a hotel. Your mine must be a sure-enough bonanza."

Will smiled. "Oh, don't think we own this; we only have a flat in it."

Jim did n't know what a flat was, but ex-

pected to find out. He followed young Brien up a flight of stairs, through a side door, and into a hall filled with curious things, which his eyes took in with a swift glance. He stooped to examine the bottom of an umbrella-stand, and called out excitedly: "Why, here, this is an elephant's foot! Real thing?"

"Yes, the real thing. I killed it myself."

"And this lion?"

"Killed him, too!"

Jim straightened up. "I guess I 've underestimated you. A man who kills lions and elephants is a sure-enough hunter, and don't need any back talk from me."

Will hastened to depreciate himself: "But I never killed a grizzly. I want to go to the Rockies and get a grizzly. I suppose you 've killed a lot of 'em."

Jim looked grave. "Nobody kills a lot o' grizzlies, stranger. I 've had my share. They 're lonesome beasts, and they make a country mighty empty when they come rampin' down a grassy slope. Why, howdy, howdy! I 'm mighty glad to see you again," he said as Mary came out to greet him.

She looked prettier than ever and very womanly in the modest gray dress which she

chose with design to please Jim. "I can't have you talking about grizzly bears and elephants where I cannot hear you. Come in. Luncheon is quite ready."

She led the way through a big, well-lighted room (which the mountaineer studied with another swift side glance) out into a dining-room set for three only. It was a beautiful room, and Jim said: "This is purty slick for an old Injun like me."

"Sit right opposite me, Jim, where I can see you. Your complexion will bear the light better than mine. Now, you 're to call me Mary, and my brother Will."

"All right, Mary; anything at all," replied Jim, with a smile such as women rarely saw on his face. "I 'm agreeable."

"Since when, this familiar discourse?" asked Will. "Occasionally you surprise me."

"Oh, it began immediately after we became acquainted, did n't it, Jim?"

"It did so. All my friends call me Jim. I don't think I 'd come to dinner if any one shouted 'Mister' at me. We don't even call a congressman Mister in Wagon Wheel."

"Go on with your talk about grizzly bears

and the Rocky Mountains," said Mary. "I wish I might see them; perhaps I shall sometime."

A shadow fell on the mountaineer's face. "They 're not what they were when I first rode through the Gap fifteen years ago," he said slowly. "They were sure-enough wild, at least in places; but now the silver-miners have lined every hill with trails and spotted 'em with cabins and pock-marked 'em with prospect-holes. I 've done my share of it too—and I 'm ashamed of it. The game is mostly all gone; but the peaks are there." He smiled exultantly. "Can't any of us tear them down yet awhile—" He paused abruptly. "But I 'm not playing my ace for Will here to trump with a lion story. I 'm layin' low in the company of a man who cuts the toe-nails of elephants."

"Oh, you must n't mind Will. When he goes hunting he has a little army of camp-followers and a whole magazine of special guns. His hunting does n't call for bravery."

Will colored a little. "That is true, Jim. I have n't pretended to do the kind of hunting you Americans do; you must bear me out in that. The Daniel Boone sort of thing does n't

suit a lazy fellow like me. Too much work about it; too lonesome, too."

Jim looked at Will's small white hands, and then at his own big hairy knuckles. "I guess we did n't come out o' the same box. I need exercise to keep my cog-wheels workin' smooth — I need it right now. A year o' London would send me home by freight."

"Have n't sold your mine, have you?" asked Mary.

"Not that I know of. I 've been twistin' a forked stick down a whole lot of holes, but no rabbit shows up yet. Have n't raised a bunch of fur even."

Mary looked at Will comically, then back to Jim. "What do you mean by that? Do people catch rabbits with forked sticks?"

"I used to when I was a kid."

"Have you seen Twombly?"

"Twombly keeps the other side o' the ridge; I reckon he smells bear."

"Well, we must help you sell that mine. We might take a share or two ourselves, Will?"

"I 'm going to see Twombly myself in a day or two," replied Will. "We ought to look into the prospect, at least."

All the time this talk was going on Jim and the girl were looking into each other's eyes, he with a puzzled intentness, she with a singularly eager gaze. Her face was as fair as a rose, and her teeth were white and even. The mountaineer's eyes grew deep and dark with a growing comprehension of her beauty.

"Don't you think he 's like Joe?" Mary asked abruptly of her brother, quite as though Jim had left the room.

"Not a bit," replied Will. "Joe was sandy."

"I know; but his ways, his speech?"

"Well, a little — yes, now you speak of it. There are some similarities — due to the outdoor life, I fancy."

Mary turned to Jim. "Are you still finding fault with our climate?"

"I 'd as soon live in a cistern with the cover on," he replied without smiling.

She laughed at his frank disgust, and the curve of her beautiful lips was deeply alluring. This brilliant creature, as swift as flame, was a dazzling form of human life to a man accustomed only to the rudest types of women. Her audacity, her passion, were not to be

taken for what they seemed: back of all her moods was design. What her motives were he could not divine. He was not a clod. He lacked polish and training, but not discernment. Mary's mounting interest in him moved him powerfully, but instead of growing voluble he became silent, and at last looked at her with a meditative, absent-minded stare which puzzled her.

"It 's a strange thing — I can't quite think you are real," she said. "I feel as though I were reading a story."

"Same here," he replied, with curt gravity. "Play your next card."

Mary laughed. "I know what you mean."

The brother, in obedience to a significant look from his sister, strolled away and left the two together. Mary leaned her chin on her folded hands, and said:

"Jim, I like you, and I 'm going to help you sell that mine."

"That 's mighty white of you," he replied. "If I don't sell I 'm sure side-tracked in 'Lonesome Valley.'"

"I suppose there 's a woman waiting for you somewhere?"

"I 'm not so sure of that. I wish there was.

I 've got a notion I could find one somewhere if I had time to take a lantern and go look —especially after I sell my mine."

She reached her right hand toward him with a sudden pretty gesture. "Jim, confide in me. Were you ever in love?" He did not reply instantly, and she added swiftly: "Now, don't be angry; we 're going to be chums, you know."

Jim twisted in his seat; at length he said slowly: "Well, I 'll tell you how it is. Men like me don't use that word very often."

"What word?" she asked relentlessly.

He ignored her question. "I 've liked a couple of girls pretty well in my time. I reckon I 'd 'a' married one of 'em, only things did n't come my way, and so I got off the bridge and let the other feller go by. Now, see here," he said, with a sudden smile, "it 's your ante—who is this 'Joe' you mentioned a little piece back?"

She looked away. When she faced him her eyes were wet. "He was a man—a big man like you. He liked the sun and the woods and the mountains, and talked of them with the same wild light in his eyes. He was an Irishman, and that means he would have

been a comrade to you in any enterprise that bespoke freedom and good will to man. He went to Africa one autumn, and he never came back to me. He went away on an expedition into the wild country with no one but negroes for company. A fever seized him, and he died among the blacks, who loved him and buried him and put a cairn above his grave—"

She paused and closed her eyes tightly as if to keep back the tears, but they came stealing out in spite of her will, wetting the edges of her long lashes.

Jim's heart grew very tender, and reaching out a long arm, he took her hand. "See here, little woman, that 's powerful hard lines. I wish I could 'a' been there to help Joe."

She withdrew her hand and smiled up at him with pathetic brightness. "Now I 'm ashamed of my nerves. You men are so big and slow-moving. I wish I had your power to be calm and—" She shook off her emotion. "It 's just nerves; you can't understand it. We of the civilized centers are just *rotten* with nerves. Don't talk about me any more; tell me all about yourself. Tell me about the snow-slides and the way the rocks fall in the

spring. Dr. Robertson said you gave a wonderful talk about these things the last time you were there—and do you know you 've converted Mrs. Robertson?"

"Converted her to what?"

"To a liking for you. She could n't tolerate you at first."

"Could n't she? I don't remember asking her to do anything with me but just let me alone."

"She 's quite enthusiastic over you now. She 's to have another dinner-party soon, and Mr. Twombly is to be there. We are all going to help you corral Twombly—corral is right, is n't it?" she added brightly.

"It 'll do; but I want to rope and tie him myself."

She puzzled an instant over his phrase, then said: "We are all united in a desire to sacrifice Twombly. He 's rich, and a mining engineer, and thinks he knows all about such things. He can command barrels of money, as you Americans say." She called her brother, who was reading by the window of the sitting-room: "Will, come here a moment."

Will rose and came forward with a quizzical smile on his face. "Have you just missed

me? I 've read the 'Tale of Desert Sands' half-way through. I 'm bound to say I would rather have listened to Jim, however. What are you talking about?"

"Oh, grizzlies and Indians—at least, I 'm about to ask Jim concerning the Indians. Are they as fierce as people say?"

Jim hesitated a little. "Well, now, I 'll tell you about the Injuns. I never lived with 'em, like 'Black Mose,' but I can sign-talk a little, and I 've seen a good deal of four or five tribes, and I don't line up against 'em the way some men do. They 're walkin' hard lines these days, and it appears to me they 're doin' better than I could in their places." There was unmistakable gravity in Jim's voice. "As I say, I don't like 'em very much—any more than I do Chinamen; but then, they 're humans, same as the rest of us, and mighty patient, considerin' the projeckin' they have to stand on the part of cattle-men and agents."

Will looked very serious. "I suppose it 's with them as it is with our black fellows down in the Colony. They 're very decent chaps when given fair treatment."

"The way I put it up is like this," Jim went on: "they have a right to their way

of thinkin', and they 've got a right to a place on earth — but they are up against a hard outfit."

As Mary rose a little later, Jim said: "I 'm much obliged for this snack. It 's been right hearty grub. When you call at my shack on the edge of the Grizzly Bear, I 'll give you snow-water to drink and mountain trout baked in the ashes. If I 'm not in when you come by, just help yourself to any cold coffee or beans you may find, and camp till I come home."

"We will, we will!" cried Mary. "Cold beans! Think of it! I never ate cold beans in my life."

"Well, I never eat much of anything else. That sizes us both up, I reckon," said Jim, with a sly smile, as they were returning to the sitting-room.

"Here are some photographs of my country," said Will, handing a handful of amateur prints to the miner. "I did them myself. They 're rather good, don't you think?"

"You mean Africa? Can't get it into my head Africa is anything but a sand desert or a thick swamp full of snakes as big as stove-pipes. I heard a feller lecture about it once

in Wagon Wheel, and never have had any notion o' goin' there since."

As he ran the photographs over in his hand his attention was arrested. "Hello! Why, this looks like New Mexico — and say, here 's a chap that can set a horse! What is he — Australian?"

"No; he 's one of our South African fellows. Rather good seat, don't you think?"

"He 's all *right;* but the dudes I see here in your parks break my sleep—knees all hunched up, reins in both hands; they all ride like a sack o' shot. They ought to be arrested for disturbin' the peace."

"I wish I could see *you* ride," said Mary.

"That 's easy. Bring on your horse and saddle, and your strip o' road, and I 'll show you how we do it in the West."

Mary instantly seized upon the idea. "We 'll do it! Will, have Admiral saddled for Jim. I 'll take Dapple, and we 'll off for a ride. Come, let 's out for a lark!" She glowed with anticipation of it.

Will was also interested. "Very well; I 'll order the horses saddled at once. You 'll just have time to take a turn."

Jim interposed: "But wait. I can't ride

in these togs. I ought to have a short coat and 'chaps,' at least."

"What are 'chaps'?"

"A sort of leather leggings. The boys used to wear 'em in the mesquite country; they 're supposed to be the proper outfit for a cow-boy, and I reckon you want me to look the whole proposition?"

"Oh, we 'll fix you out," said Will. "You can take my leggings and breeches."

Jim smiled. "I reckon you 'll need to let 'em all out a link or two. No; if you 've got any sort of jacket that I can squeeze into, I can put a wrinkle into my pants and hold 'em down some way. This coat is the main trouble."

"Oh, we 'll furnish you, never fear!" replied Mary, as she ran out of the room to dress.

Will took Jim to his room and fitted him out with a reefer, which was a very decent fit next to Jim's shirt. "Man, what a chest you have!" he said, as he watched Jim wriggle into it.

"How would this do for a sombrero?" he asked, holding up a clay-colored hat with a rooster's feather in the band.

Jim's eyes lightened. "First-rate. Where 'd you dig that up at?"

"It 's an Australian militiaman's head-gear."

Jim took it and looked it over carefully. "I 'm a little suspicious of the feather, but the rest of it is in line," he said.

He bluntly refused to wear the hunting-breeches. "No; thank ye kindly, but I would n't be found dead in such things. Why, they look like two quarters of venison. I 'll just slip your leggings over my pants—that 's the checker; makes me look like a 'yaller-legged expert,' as the boys say in Wagon Wheel; but they 'll do for the once. Would n't the boys make it hot for me in this rig!"

As they all met in the library, Mary clapped her hands in joy of his appearance. "You are superb!" she said, facing him nearly.

Jim smiled down at her as if humoring a child. The top of her riding-hat came just to his chin. "Little pardner, I can return the compliment. You 're as neat as a smokeless cartridge. You look like a girl that come a-ridin' over the Silver City trail one

day and spoiled every man's appetite for a week."

She laughed. "How dreadful! I hope I shall not interfere with your enjoyment of dinner." She thrust out her hand. "Please button my glove?"

Jim took the little hand in his bear-like paws. "I never did such a thing in my life before, but I 'm letting no good thing pass me to-day. Great Moses! what a wrist! 'Bout as big as a lizard's, ain't it?"

She made a mouth of disgust, and tried to take her hand away. He held it in his big right fist.

"Hold on, now — don't get grouchy. A lizard has a mighty purty hand — purty as a baby's. You need n't get mad over it. I was handing you out a compliment."

"Indeed! were you? I don't enjoy being compared to reptiles. Well, we must be going," she said, and Will led the way down into the courtyard, where a groom was holding a couple of saddled horses.

Jim looked them over critically. "They 're clipped and sandpapered and polished by hand like your fields," he said, "too slick for any use. Regular rocking-horses."

Mary was disappointed. "Don't you like them? Whoa, Dapple! You dare n't say she is n't lovely! Don't you think she is handsome?"

"M-m—yes—oh, yes; they 're purty, but I was wondering how they 'd stand a sixty-mile jaunt over the hills. You ride the gray, do ye? Well, gimme your foot!"

"Oh, Ferguson will help, thank you."

Jim stopped the groom. "Ferguson, you 're not in it this time. When I take a girl out, I do all the waitin' and tendin' myself. Come, up ye go!" He took his position beside the horse.

Mary laughingly put her small foot in his lowered palm, and he commanded, "Now, jump!"

She rose to the saddle with a precision which pleased him. "You 're on to your job." He grasped her foot. "Here 's the stirrup; where 's your knee?" He laid his hand on her knee. "Your stirrup 's too high. What in Sam Hill do you English hunch your knees up that way for? Straighten your leg." He let the stirrup down a couple of holes. "There, that 's more like it. You want to grip your horse. If I had you on

the trail a few days I 'd show you how to ride." He turned to his own mount. "So I 'm to ride this tin pony, am I? And on that back-pad?"

He gathered the reins into his left hand, and leaped into the saddle without touching the stirrup. The horse, surprised and alarmed, sprang wildly forward, and being checked strongly, reared high on his hind legs, and slipped and fell backward. Mary uttered a cry of terror, and the groom and Will rushed forward. Jim came down safely on his feet beside the excited animal, and his face had a comical look as he said: "Why, it is alive! Don't be scared; I won't hurt him. He 'll get used to me in a few minutes. Get up, Sampson!" As the horse rose, Jim took his seat again. And as he soothed the horse to a standstill, he remarked: "There ain't any new tricks for a pony like this to teach an old cow-puncher. This saddle queers me," he added. "Like ridin' a silk-handkerchief." Letting down the stirrups several inches, he set spur to the dancing horse.

"What does an English horse know about the rein?" He urged the horse about the court, trying to guide him, cow-boy fashion,

by pressing the rein across the neck; but the horse only *gaumed.* "Not a blame thing! I don't suppose there 's a horse in England knows the cross-neck rein. You can't do any high-class riding while you rein like a drayman," he explained to Will. "Well, the procession is ready to move. Strike out! I 'll keep alongside someway."

As they rode out through the arched gateway into the street, Mary realized for the first time how indisguisably big and singular her cavalier was. The long, straight thrust of his legs, the swing of his powerful shoulders, the graceful suppling of every joint of his frame to the horse's motion, would have made him a marked figure even in conventional riding-dress; clothed in close-fitting black trousers, gray coat, and gray sombrero, he looked as alien as an Arapaho.

Mary was vastly pleased with him. "You ride like Buffalo Bill," she said. "I like it; it 's so different from our way. Everybody will take you for an Australian, with that hat."

"I don't mind that; but I 'd hate to be taken for a London dude or an earl, or anything like that."

"You are quite safe," she said, laughing up at him. "How do I ride?"

"Like the queen of Barnum's circus."

"Thank you for another original compliment."

"No compliment at all; just the plain God's truth. Don't it go better with that knee down?"

"Indeed, yes. I shall always ride this way hereafter — in memory of you."

"I 'm not dead yet," he said; "but I think I would be if I had to live a year in this city. I 'd get so I could n't ride a horse down to the spring and back." He sat his trotting horse without apparent concern as to its gait, while Mary rose and fell in the English fashion.

"Whole lot of exercise connected with that way of riding," remarked Jim. "Ought to produce calves like a killdee's. It tickled the boys mightily the first time they saw an Englishman ride that way; it was in Garden City —"

He broke off and followed Mary's lead through a granite gateway.

Entering the park, they rode along a great curving driveway, which was thick with carriages moving slowly, formally — great glit-

tering vehicles drawn by sleek horses, the embodiment of family pride and fixed income to Jim, who looked upon the stolid faces of the occupants with instinctive hatred. They represented to him the pitiless few who live on the toil of thousands, corrupt and self-satisfied.

Some of the heavy women in these carriages recognized Mary and bowed, and some of the men in tall hats also saluted her; but she turned to Jim and said: "I 'm not going to see anybody but you this afternoon. It 's too much bother for you." She watched him as he rode at ease. "Does n't that trot tire you? Shall we gallop?"

Jim smiled. "I 've rode on a worse trot than this ten hours at a stretch without eating or drinking. Of course I was n't doing it for fun —" He broke off and rode in silence for a few moments. "That was in western Kansas —" Suddenly the strangeness, the impossibility, of his condition swept over him. To be riding thus in the heart of London with a woman whose life was as far removed from his as this terraced drive was from the Kit Carson trail, was the inconceivable realized. For an instant it seemed a dream. It seemed

that he could turn his horse's head and ride away into the plains, and in an hour see the San Francisco peaks loom in the deep-blue sky. It could not be that three thousand miles of gray water and nearly the same expanse of earth lay between this smooth drive, glittering with carriages, and the green-and-purple slopes of Mount Ouray. He swept his hand across his eyes as if to clear his vision.

"What are you thinking about, cow-boy?" Mary asked, pulling her horse down to a walk, and turning a radiant face upon him.

He did not smile. "I 'm thinkin' I 'm a long way from home, and night comin' on," he replied. "I feel as lonesome as I did once when I was ridin' through the Navajo reservation. You see, I 'd been prospectin' around down just over the line, and on my way out I took a short cut toward Durango. I did n't know that a lot o' lahees had been on the reservation, and that old Black Fox was on his ear, till I was high on the divide and into the thick of the fuss. The worst of it was I had a pick and shovel on my pack-mule, and I did n't want to throw 'em away. First I knew, a raw-boned old Injun come a-runnin' out of a

hogan, and, pointing at my tools, began to jabber bloody murder. Then the whole blame settlement come pilin' out. The women joined in, and the dogs, too. They sure are a hot people when they wake up, and I was nervous. I put up some sign-talk, and asked, 'What 's the row?' Then the old hosteen said that some white men had been on Navajo land digging for gold, that the people were angry, and that Black Fox threatened to kill every white man found digging inside the Navajo lines."

Mary's eyes were wide with interest. "Were n't you frightened?"

"Well, I can't say I felt like Saturday night, but I handed out a fancy bluff. I told the old hosteen to take my back trail, and if he found I had been digging on Indians' land I 'd give 'em my whole outfit. Finally he made the sign to follow, and off we pattered straight toward a big black, pine-covered butte. It was sure a wild country and new to me. We rode till about ten o'clock, passing through a settlement once in a while, and trailing along a lot of sassy-looking warriors. It certainly looked owly for Jim; but I kept a wooden lip, and rode along tired and hun-

gry. Finally we slid down into a deep valley, into a snarl of dogs, and pulled up in a big village. Then four different things broke loose. For five minutes I could n't hear a thing but the yapping of dogs, and the *hishing* of the women and young uns as they tried to stop the howl. When the dogs finally shut up, the hosteen raised a signal-yawp, and an old chief came out and gave a few orders, and I was snaked over to his hogan, and he said, 'Who are you?' I told him I was a miner.

"'What are you on Indians' land for?' he asked.

"I told him.

"'You are lying,' he says.

"'That 's all right,' I signed; 'but you send a man back on my trail and see — besides, I 'm hungry,' I said. The old chief turned and gave orders for some grub, and suspended my trial till I filled up on roast mutton and pounded corn. All of a sudden I had a bright notion. 'You know Blazing Hand?' I asked. The old chap got interested right off. 'Yes; what of it?' he says, gruff as a grizzly. I could see I had him going.

"'Well, I am his brother. See here.' I took out my wallet and I showed 'em a little

tintype picture of Mose. They all fell on my neck. Nothing was good enough for me after that. They hardly let me sleep a wink. I had to spin a lot of fancy talk about Mose. I knew he stood in with 'em; but I did n't know he was considered the angel Gabriel."

"How strange, how wonderful! Who was this 'Mose'?" asked Mary. The two horses were walking along a quiet curve of the drive.

"Mose? Well, Mose is the real thing. He don't wear long hair nor a fringed shirt; but he 's the best shot, the sandiest bronco-buster, and the best man to a man in trouble that ever drifted over the divide. There 's some mystery about Mose. They say he was thrown down by his girl. I don't know anything about that, for Mose is a mighty bad man to cross-examine. Everybody in the mountains knows Black Mose, and the Indians just about think he 's king of the grizzlies."

It was Mary's turn to look thoughtful now. Jim's voice, words, accent, and above all his emotions, were so alien to her thought, her life, and her surroundings that they appealed to her imagination with great power. She looked up at him. His handsome face was set in resolute

lines; his skin was brown with the winds of the mountains; and every movement of his splendid body suggested free spaces. A sudden disgust seized her.

"How mean and restricted all this seems to me when you talk!" she said, indicating the swarming walks and drives of the park. "You take me to the big, vital, earthy things. You make me feel the fascination of a world where clothes count for nothing, and where 'society' has no meaning. See these people stare!" she said in sudden bitter loathing. "See these two-legged things in long coats and tall hats. They think they 're men! If you and Joe and Mose are men, what are they? Oh, I 'm heart-weary of the life we call civilized. We 're all rotten and dying of it. Nine tenths of us are degenerates. Look at me, with arms like your little fingers, and a head full of hate of God and man. What is the good of it all? Come, let us escape!"

She struck her horse with the whip, and galloped away beyond the reach of those who sauntered idly along the garden side of the drive.

Jim spurred after her, stirred by the intensity of her passionate voice and her blazing

eyes, comprehending little of the sudden deep disquiet below the words she uttered.

When he reached her side again they were beyond the crowds, and she said lightly, "What do you think of our parks?"

He understood her desire to cover her emotional outburst. "Your trees are mighty fine," he replied, looking at the splendid old oaks and elms. "They look like the pines that grow in the cañons deep down out of the wind. A tree is a neighbor to me anywhere. I remember the first time I ever saw a big pine. It was on the old Kit Carson trail; I 'd lived on the Kansas prairies all my life up to that time, and had never seen anything but a cottonwood or a willow, and when I turned a corner and sighted a bunch of big pines I set up a yell."

"You started to say something about the way all this affected you," said Mary a few moments later, indicating the slowly moving streams of carriages across the green, the troops of horsemen on shining horses rising and falling laboriously in their saddles, the richly dressed ladies on the walks, attended by men all alike in tall hats and long coats. Jim looked at the scene with serious eyes, but did

not reply till Mary asked, "What do you think of it?"

The mountaineer's face grew thoughtful. "It scares me; it sure does. I 'd rather break a leg in the middle of the Navajo reservation than fall sick here. I could n't trust these black-coated dudes for a minute. They 'd see a man die, squinting at him all the while through their eye-glasses. I s'pose they mean well enough, too; but they don't know how it is themselves. I 'm afraid of cities, anyhow; they 're just like so many rattlesnake pastures to me. I can't trust the people. I only know six men in Denver and one man and two women in Chicago; all my friends live in the mountains or on the range. You can trust a mountaineer to take care of any man that falls down; but here—not on your life! It 's dog eat dog when you strike a town. They are all your enemy or they don't care. This seems to me the worst on the line. Every time I think of being in this town sick or without money, I just nacherly have a cold chill that makes my teeth chatter like a woodchuck's."

"Are n't you rather hard on us?" asked Mary, with a side glance.

"I s'pose I am. Mebbe I 'm wrong about it, too; but that 's my feeling about it. I 'm plumb scared of cities. I 'm not built right to feel safe alone in the middle of all these slick folks—now that 's right."

Mary looked up at him with a smile. "You 're not afraid of me?"

"Well, not to hurt." His eyes began to twinkle a little.

"Nor of Will?"

"No; but he 's an Irishman, and besides he 's a hunter. He knows how it is himself."

"Nor of Dr. Robertson?"

"No; doc' 's all right. But there it is—he was born in the woods of Canada. He had the right kind of a bringin' up. He can swing an ax and fry a flapjack. He 's educated in the right lines."

She laughed. "Then it seems that all the people really worth while are of the woods or the mountains?"

"I reckon that 's about it. That 's my notion to a dot. You see, such men know how much a cup o' hot coffee means to a man just off the trail. These others—well, now I 'll stop right there. They are your people, and I don't want to hurt your feelin's. Any-

body can have the town — that wants it; the mountains are good enough for me. Which way do we turn now?"

"To the left. How does Admiral go?"

"Oh, so-so—if he 'd only rein a little less like a mule."

"You 'll like the 'Savage Africa' show; there are some good riders there. I fancy it 's a little like your own wild West."

"When do we go?"

"Very soon." Suddenly turning, she cried: "Oh, I 've an idea! Could n't you show us how to make a camp-fire, and all that? It would be jolly good fun."

"Sure thing! but where 's your outfit and your timber? I have n't seen a place as big as my hat that was n't barbered as smooth as the back of your hand. You can't camp in a park like this. You 've got to have timber and water."

"Oh, I know a place. It 's on the famous Black Moor. We have a cottage down that way, and we could manage it perfectly. Will you go?" She was fairly breathless with interest in the idea.

"Certain sure, for a day or two. I 've got to sell my mine."

"Be quite easy about that. I 'll invite Mr. Twombly, and we 'll all make a set at him. He shall be sacrificed. Now, let me think—" And she began to plan the outing.

As they clattered through the arched gate into the little courtyard, Will came out to meet them.

"How did you enjoy your ride?" he asked of the miner.

Jim reached out a long arm and a big, clutching hand. "I feel full size to-day. Seems like I could take a fall out of any man livin'," he said.

"We 've had a glorious ride!" exclaimed Mary; "and oh, Will, Jim is going to show us how he camps on the trail!"

As he climbed to his hole in the wall that night Jim suddenly realized that the little girl in Aspen Park was very far away and that another woman had drawn very near. London was distinctly less lonely and menacing by reason of Mary's flower-like face and burning, vivid eyes.

VI

JIM MEETS HIS MAN TWOMBLY

IN the days which followed, Mary formed almost daily plans for the mountaineer, and Jim yielded himself to them as though he were indulging a child. Will was, of course, her stalking-horse, and though very patient of her whims, nearly reached the point of rebellion one day.

"See here, sis, where is this to end?" he asked as they sat at breakfast. "You 're seeing a great deal of Jim."

"No matter; I am amused," she recklessly replied. "I have n't been really entertained, carried out of myself, since — you know when; so let me laugh for a day or two."

"The laugh will come to a sob, I 'm thinking," he sagely answered.

"That 's the Irish of it, too," she answered. "Jim 's all right. I won't hurt him, and as for me, it does n't much matter. He 's doing

me good. I am getting a totally new conception of life from him. I am looking at the East through the eyes of the West, and I find it diverting."

"I don't like it, Mary. It is n't quite honest with an honest man," Will replied very gently. He did not say what he already knew, that people were beginning to discuss her relation to Jim as the "freak attachment" of a lawless woman. It was in the hope that he might persuade her to a different course that he joined heartily in her plan for a camp on the moor. At any rate, what she did there would be less conspicuous than in London.

Dr. Robertson uttered a word of warning to Jim one evening after they had all been to the theater together.

"Jim, I must put you on your guard against Mary Brien. She 's one of these ambitious young novelists who serve up their own emotions, as well as those of their friends, for the public's gratification. She 's a fine woman in many ways, and we are all fond of her, but she 's a bit theatric. She 's a good deal of a fraud also. You should take her tears and smiles at a liberal discount. She likes to

experiment with men. Don't let her use you to her own amusement."

"She 's welcome to all she gets out o' me," said Jim, coldly. "I pipped my shell as many as two seasons ago. I 'm not afraid of a little woman like Mary."

"Now don't underestimate her," replied the doctor, earnestly. "She is by no means the child she looks. She is an old, old woman in some ways—a rare blossom of degeneracy, I fear; and she has all the wiles of a pretty woman at ready command. I have seen her fool several good men."

"I 'll get a mouthful while she 's getting a full meal," said the mountaineer, grimly.

Jim was now on excellent terms with Mrs. Robertson, whose matronly charm he freely acknowledged. She kept at Twombly courageously till at last he was forced, in decency, to set aside a night for dinner. Immediately word was sent to Jim, who turned up promptly, though skeptical of results.

Twombly turned out to be a familiar type, the kind of Englishman one often meets in the mining towns of the Rocky Mountains — a big, blond, handsome, loose-jointed man, who shook hands awkwardly. His clothes

did not fit, but his eyes were clear and calm, and his smile was amiable. He said "indeed" and "quite so," and remained non-committal through all the explanations. His judicial impassivity was a little irritating to Jim, who was not yet inured to the English stare.

"When did you leave Colorado?" Twombly asked.

"About five years ago, judgin' by my own wear and tear; by the almanac it 's about five weeks."

Mary fairly pounced upon Twombly in her eagerness to help Jim sell his mine. "I 've agreed to take some stock," she said, "provided you go on and report favorably."

"Indeed," said Twombly, ironically; "then I *must* report favorably, willy-nilly."

Nothing that Mary could say enabled him to take a serious view of the situation; and Jim, feeling the edge of Twombly's skepticism, refused to say a word more than this: "The mine is open to your inspection; take it or leave it. That 's all I 've got to say."

However, Twombly showed a little more interest when Mary touched on Jim's experience as an actual miner and mountaineer, and asked some questions which might have

led to a deeper interest had Jim answered with his usual vividness; but he did not. He was brief to curtness, and lounged low in his chair, with a dangerous glitter in his eyes. He was not accustomed to having men question his word, or express doubt even in looks, and he would have "broken loose" if Twombly had not been skilfully drawn off by Will, leaving Mary alone with him.

Jim then said: "Your man Twombly 's got my quills all pointin' the wrong way. He 'd better keep on the other side o' the creek, or I 'll reach out and gather a handful of fur. I 'm mean to-day —just plumb measly; and I 'll take a fall out of Twombly for exercise if he rubs against me again."

"Don't be foolish, Jim," she hastened to say. "Mr. Twombly comes in, as you would say, like a wolf into a trap, and he naturally doubts. Give him time to understand you and trust you as we do, and things will take a turn. Let me manage. You will, won't you?"

There could be no resisting when Mary pleaded. Jim did not say a word to indicate his softening; but Mary knew his ways, and when he smiled, she rose and sought out

Twombly, warning him to be less openly ironical, and inviting him to join her camping party on the moor.

Mrs. Robertson was the only woman in Mary's party. "I want Jim all to myself," she said calmly, "and you make a tractable chaperon. Jim is impressionable, and I 'm careful not to introduce him to young and pretty girls."

"Of course you are of responsible age, Mollie, but I 'm apprehensive. You could n't possibly marry this mountaineer, and go into his wild land."

"Oh, hush! Don't force everything to conclusions that way. Will is croaking the same old tune. It is n't a question of marriage. Let us alone. We 'll settle things ourselves. He amuses me — nothing more."

"I consider him far less simple," Mrs. Robertson replied. "His utterance is plain and direct, but his thinking is not easy for me to understand. He seems to me sometimes to be laughing at us all. No good can come of your intimacy. I sincerely hope you won't invite him down to Wyndhurst."

Mary did not immediately reply, and when she did she was smiling.

"Is n't his comment delicious? I take him to all the show-places, the historic spots, and he says, 'Aha, I want to know!' I took him to Westminster Abbey the other day, and after we had walked through it from end to end, he merely said: 'I 'd hate to live where land is so scarce you have to bury folks in the cellar.'"

"Did he show any appreciation of Shakspere or Milton?"

"Not a particle. He was interested in Cromwell because he 'downed the kings,' and in Darwin because he 'knew all about animals.'"

"I never could tell whether he was frightfully ignorant or only making believe. He bluntly told me he did n't think much of English ways or English books."

"Why should he? He is n't English. He 's Norman French. We take it for granted that all Americans are Englishmen, but they are not. The ordinary American tourist who bows down before our idols, and feels his blood thrill at the names of our kings, is only an Englishman born in America. But most Americans care nothing for England. Jim says he fairly represents a good many young Americans who have nothing 'ag'in'' us

particularly, but they don't 'hone' after us. That 's why I like Jim. He 's honest. He is n't looking for a social success, and can afford to be himself. His frank contempt for our time-honored absurdities is delicious."

"He does n't despise our money," retorted Mrs. Robertson, a little maliciously.

"No — and yet he is n't here of his own accord. As he says, 'good American dollars' are rich enough for him; but he 's over here, and naturally wishes to be successful in his trip."

"I like him, too," said Grace; "but he 's a little too assertive of his peculiar views sometimes."

"I would n't have him different for worlds!" exclaimed Mary. "And I 'm getting more deeply interested in this camping trip than I ever was in a ball."

Grace looked at her solemnly. "If I did not know you so well, Mollie, I 'd think you a little crazy."

Mary laughed. "Jim thinks I am the only entirely sensible woman in London. So it 's 'an even break,' as Jim says."

Jim was freshly impressed with the crowds over on the Surrey side, where they went the

following Friday morning to take the train. "Too many people," he said. "I 've got to find a lonesome spot, or go crazy. I want to ride off somewhere where nothing moves but once in a while a chipmunk. I 'm sick for the lonesomeness on the Kicking Horse. These crawling maggots are getting into my brain. See 'em crowd; see 'em hurry!" he broke out, indicating the thousands of rushing travelers, porters, guards, and policemen. "Like a herd o' sheep around a water-hole. I could stand it for a few hours every day; but to be where I 've got to see 'em every hour of the day is hell; it sure is. I 'd sooner lead sheep like a greaser in the Toltec hills."

When they were seated in a coach, with bags and bundles all in place, Mary turned and gravely said: "I like your profanity; it 's so satisfying. Please don't mind me. Indeed, I wish you 'd swear a few good strong words on *my* account. I feel just as you do about this city life, only my voice won't allow me to curse. It 's comical to hear a woman swear, her voice is so squeaky and uncertain. Once when I was very angry I said, 'Hillty divelty dam!' and I thought I

was very wicked; but Will laughed till he cried." She sat up straight. "But, Jim, you must n't get savage; you must n't lose your humor. It won't do. Don't take us too seriously over here; it would spoil you entirely. I like you best when you laugh at us; I like your cheerful irreverence. So few Americans that I meet are natural. They bow down to historical dust and ashes and tombstones. You 're the one out of ten million to value us as we deserve. Walk round us; then sniff and ride on into your mountains and forget us."

"There are one or two folks I reckon I can't shake so easy as that," he replied, with a singular side glance at her.

"Quite probably they are the very ones you should soonest forget," she made answer, and there was no humor in her voice.

They rode in silence for a few minutes, and Jim's face grew very grim and dark. At last he said: "I had a letter from Chicago this morning; my old pardner, the doc, is depending on me to sell this mine. It 'll just about break his leg if I don't. That 's one bur that 's tight in my sock to-day. I feel just now like a man running away from his job. I

had n't ought to be picnickin' with you; I ought to be rustlin' tenderfeet earls for the good of the outfit."

"Trust me, Jim. Twombly is coming down on Wednesday, and we will secure his decision. All you want is for him to return with you and look at the mine, is n't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, please be happy again. It will all come out right. You must let him like you, and then it will be easier to 'rope him in.'"

Jim recovered himself as the train drew out into the beautiful low-lying country toward the south. The thick, tall grass starred with buttercups made him realize that it was spring. The wind was as cold and keen as a sword, and the sun was pale and lifeless; but the hedges were in full flower. The land was June, though the wind was sullen March. Opulent gardens flashed by, radiant with pear- and thorn-blossoms, and narrow lanes wound away, flecked with the pale-purple shadows of overhanging willows.

Suddenly he clutched Mary's arm. "Hold on! Pull up! There 's a piece of wild pine-lands."

Mary laughed at his excitement.

"Oh, we have barrens down in my country that have never known the plow."

Jim looked back at the vanishing village.

"What town was that?"

"That was Farmvale."

"When I go back I 'm going to stop off and take a run through that grove, just to see something that has n't been currycombed; and the man that stops me will sure wish he had n't. I feel like a wildcat in a cellar; 'pears to me I 've been gone six months from the rocks and the smell of the pine-trees. I 'd hate to live in a place where people had lived and died for a thousand years. I spent a half a day once on the big mesa in the Santa Clara valley, digging around among the ruins. It was a hot, still day, and I laid down under some little old piñon-trees close by the trail. And all of a sudden I thought I heard voices — a whole lot of 'em. Then they began to sing, and a woman began to moan. I jumped up, my hair bristling; but there wa'n't a thing in sight. I 'd gone into a doze, and the wind moanin' in the piñon-trees made me dream. Then I shut my eyes and listened again, and I could hear 'em whisper — them dead women — and moan. I climbed down that

cliff, pulled in my pony, and rode off. I did n't want any more of that. That 's about the way I feel here. Too many dead people in the ground. That 's why I like the high country. You get the first whack at the water there. Nobody above ye to poison it."

Mary looked at him with musing eyes. "You 're a strange wild creature. You don't belong here."

"The way I put it up is this," replied Jim, still on high ground. "A feller belongs where the air tastes best to him. Where he can throw out his arms and say, 'All this is mine, I 'm at home.' Now I could n't do that with a city — any city. I can feel myself weakening every day I 'm shut up here."

"Oh, you must n't stay in London. But down here it will be different. You 'll like the moor. The country, even if it is old, is wholesome."

"I 'm disappointed in your farms," said Jim, a little later. "Your cattle are dogy. Whole country seems asleep. Nothin' doing. What 's the matter?"

"You 're getting beyond my depth," replied Mary. "Ask Will."

"Let 'er go. I can live without the information."

"Tell me more about those ancient cities on the mesas. Are there many of them?"

"New Mexico is pock-marked with 'em. So is Arizona in spots. Some places they 've had irrigating-ditches and gardens. It must have been a long time ago, for there is n't any water within forty miles of some of 'em now. I camped with some Smithsonian sharps at Cañon De Shay once, and from their talk I judge they could n't agree. One feller argued these cities were built a thousand years ago by another Creed o' people altogether; and the others claimed they were built by the Pueblo Injuns that live near. I sided in with the lonesome feller, but I guess the other chaps had the best of the argument."

"It 's a strange old world we inhabit; don't you think so?"

"It sure is a puzzle to an old quartz-cracker like me. I just plumb give the thing up."

They left the train at a little town the like of which the mountaineer had never seen. A cluster of little brick houses, old and vine-grown, stood close to narrow, smooth, hard

streets. Flowering trees, as radiant as June clouds, rose above gray garden walls. On the velvet meadows, which reached to the door-stones of the churches, sheep were feeding. A few birds were twittering, and a cart was moving slowly through the street; otherwise the town seemed asleep in the pale, sad sunlight, which seemed always to forecast some bitter storm.

Mary led the way to a gay road-wagon wherein a coachman sat angularly erect, with a smile that would not be restrained. At Mary's greeting he touched his hat, but did not loose his hold on the horses, which Jim studied silently.

"Smooth team you drive," he said to the coachman. "How do you keep 'em so slick?"

"What do you really think of them?" asked Mary.

"They look all right. The nigh one is the best," he answered, taking a look at his chest and fore limbs.

Mary put Grace and Will on the hinder seat of the carriage, and without trouble or foresight, Jim found himself by Mary's side in the middle seat.

The horses got away with vigor, and Jim silently watched the play of their hoofs till they swung into a narrow lane leading up a hill, then gave his attention to the landscape.

"How far are we from London?"

"About forty miles."

"Seems a thousand. Peaceful as a perta-ter-patch, ain't it? I don't imagine these chaps make a living out o' the ground," he said, indicating a group of fine houses on the hillside.

"Oh, no; those are summer cottages."

"Just shacks, eh? Well, for God's sake, what would they call a house? The more I see of you people over here, the more I wonder where your living all comes from. You must have a cinch on the rest of the world. You don't seem to earn a dollar."

"That 's a dangerous truth," said Mary; "don't say it out loud."

The road climbed a long hill by following what Jim called a "draw." "If you 'd only keep going for a couple o' days, you 'd get up where I live," he said, and his face brightened with his most attractive smile. "This is the way we follow the course of the

Grizzly Bear. Imagine that draw a cañon, with side walls ranging from one to three thousand feet, and old Ouray and Lizard Head rising up here on the right seven thousand feet above us —"

Mary interrupted: "I can't imagine it. The demand is too great. I must see them to realize it."

He took her arm with an affectionate squeeze. "I 'll tell you, you come over and let me show you how it goes."

She withdrew her arm. "I 'm afraid it 's too far away," she said, and her tone was a warning to him. "I 'd never get back; and I 'd miss all this after a while — and long for London. The low country is home to me, you know."

He smiled at her again, and in such wise that she could not understand his mind toward her. For a moment she felt that possibly Grace was right, and that he was not so simple as he seemed.

"There 's Wyndhurst," she said, pointing at a long, low house ahead. It was built of brick, and was sprinkled with all sorts of windows on the southern side.

"Right at the head of the draw," remarked

Jim. "That ought to be a mighty safe spot to hole up in for the winter."

"It is. When I come back to it I always wonder why I leave it for the city."

"Now you 're shouting!" exclaimed Jim. "I can understand bein' homesick for a tree or a garden; but it beats me that anybody can hone for a lot o' brick walls, like London. There are some trees just below my shack that I would n't lose for a whole hatful of money. They stand just right, not too thick, not too thin. The grass under 'em looks like a carpet. The tops of 'em from above look like you could walk on 'em. I know what a tree is worth, for I held down a claim for two years that was above timber-line. I 'm pretty near 'leven hundred now."

"I can't realize that either, though I 've been in the Alps."

Jim turned toward her: "There! that 's a range o' hills I 'd like to see. I 'd like to see whether they 're so much of a muchness as folks say. I have a notion they 're overestimated, like the Alleghanies. You take prairie people who never have seen the Rocky Mountains, and the little wooded foot-hills they call the Alleghanies are world-beaters."

"Oh, I don't think you 'd like the Alps; they 're all 'sandpapered,' as you call it, in the valleys, and pastured far up the sides. Then they are only a group of peaks — nothing like the great ranges you describe."

Jim set about being generous. "Well, now, of course you must bear in mind I 'm whooping it up for my own country. I 'll admit I 'm prejudiced. Mebbe you would n't think the Rockies much, especially if you just rode through on a Pullman over Marshall Pass. I 've seen some pictures of the Alps that made 'em out to be cracker-jacks — clouds and snow and ice. Now, in August, only a part of even old Lizard Head is covered with snow, but in winter they can trump anybody's best card, you bet. Ever see a snow-slide?"

"No; I never saw anything — that is, anything worth while."

"Well, the Uncompahgre range is streaked with furrows where the snow-slides have ripped away the trees. You see a terrible lot of snow falls in this range — This ain't the house, is it?" he asked, as they neared a small stone cottage.

"Oh, no; this is the porter's lodge."

"The — how much?"

"The place where my gardener lives."

"Aha, I see. I thought it did n't quite size up with the other view I had of it. But then you never can tell. Sometimes, when the light is just right, a dog on the trail ahead of you will look as big as a burro. In a blizzard I 've took a shingle to be the roof of a house."

They entered a roadway which circled the head of the "draw," and pulled up in front of the house, which was big and shapeless, but sunny with windows and covered with vines and surrounded by trees. Tennis-courts, arbors, and hothouses added other indubitable signs of luxurious recreation. Far below glimmered the village they had left, half hidden in the mist.

Jim leaped to the ground and held up his arms toward Mary. "Now, then, jump!" he commanded.

As she yielded herself to his arms he held her suspended in the air for an instant, smiling into her flushed face. "You see, you 'd better be good," he said, as he set her on her feet.

Putting his hands in his pockets, he looked around him searchingly. Scattered irregu-

larly on the dark-brown hills were other houses of brick or stone, some of them very imposing. Near by a cluster of smaller, older dwellings stood along a broad, smooth highway. "Looks like a town," said Jim.

"It is the historic village of Wyndham," Mary explained. "That used to be the post-road to East Port. We 'll go up and look at the old inn after lunch. Come in now, and let me show you the house. You can come out and look at the garden afterward."

Jim thought Ramsdell's home nice and comfortable; but there was something about this house which subdued him, something which he could not understand, something which enriched and enlightened. The phrase "an artistic home," which had contained only a vague notion before, became suddenly luminous and definite. It meant Mary's house to him thereafter, with its music, books, warm colors, and sunlit nooks.

His boots thumped loudly on the polished stairway as he followed Mary's light and childish form, and when she invited him to enter an open door, saying, "You 'll camp here," he was abashed.

"See here, little pardner, you 're miscalcu-

latin' — you sure am. This is too mighty fine for me. Just dig up a blanket somewhere and let me make down in the barn. This is made for some pretty girl, and not for an old cow-puncher like me. I 'll break something in here."

"Nothing is too fine for you," she said, with a smile. "You take what I offer you, and don't complain. I won't complain when I come to Colorado."

"All right, Mary; what you say goes with me. But what 'll I set down on? These chairs ain't made for my style of beauty. Expect me to read all these books?"

"Oh, no; you 're to read them when you want to go to sleep."

"Never laid awake a night in my life," he replied. "See here; this won't do. Nobody ought to be as fine as this. You won't want to die and go to heaven."

She laughed merrily. "Oh, this is all good, usable material," she said. "It 's made for use, like your shack. Don't be 'skeered' of it. 'Make down' in it. You see, I 'm getting your phrases. And get ready for lunch. I 'm hungry, and I know you are also."

Jim threw off his coat. "Well, here goes, pardner; I 'll be with you in a couple of jiffies — hungrier 'n a bear in March."

Mary fled, laughing. To Grace she said breathlessly: "Oh, but he is exciting, delicious! He 's a rough old bear, but he has splendid possibilities of passion."

Mrs. Robertson was very grave as she looked at her friend.

"My dear! you — be — very — careful. You 're too inflammable to play with a big, fierce flame like that man's love."

"I 'm not afraid of Jim."

"But yourself—"

"Well, that, I admit, is a different matter; but then I am having a heavenly release from being bored — and let me play"; and she went away humming a merry little song, glad to think she had this mountaineer all to herself for a week.

In the midst of this genial, friendly company, where he was not merely considered but honored, Jim returned to the mood which dominated him in Ramsdell's home. He became extremely reticent, and this sudden change in him provoked Mary's insatiate curiosity about his real inner self. Thus far

she was completely baffled by him: the life of which he seemed the complete embodiment was so far removed from all she knew that at times the man himself seemed mythical. The guileless, simple mountaineer, with his vivid and powerful phraseology, became each day less simple, less easily fathomed. Like a mountain lake, he concealed unknown deeps. He was developing new phases, like a strange plant whose flowering is unknown.

In him arose an elemental sadness which he could not understand. This home and its life, as it came to seem more and more worth while,— to be even defensible,— made him think that even the best of the wild days in the mountains might be made holier by the introduction of such a woman, such a home. Bessie, too, grew fainter on his inner eye, becoming colorlessly sweet and far off and dim —a girlish figure whose momentary passing had left him sadder and richer. As he entered his room late that night he had a sudden and powerful upwelling of distrust and irritation with himself. What business had he to be down in the country, coming and going at the call of a girl, when he had a work to do? Could he afford to waste time in this way?

He met Mary with something of this in his face next morning, and she asked: "What is your trouble, Jim? You don't look happy this morning."

"I 'm not. I can't stay here much longer. I 've got to hustle my stock together and make a sale."

"I see; you feel as if you were wasting time here with me. I don't agree with you. I know Twombly, and there 's nothing likelier to 'rope him in,' as you say, than this camping party. Trust me a little longer, old pard." She smiled with sunny candor. "I 'll bring you through. I 'm a shrewd advocate and I bring good luck."

In such wise she held him to her own plans. She had already formed a little syndicate pledged to take stock in the mine provided Twombly should approve of it, and under her influence Jim prepared to meet Twombly with a full statement of the mine, and he was expecting some fresh samples of ore from Ramsdell.

The days which followed were not like days in a dream, because Jim could not have imagined them even in a dream; it seemed that he was living out some story-book, some im-

possible tale. With Mary standing near to hand him saw and hammer and screw-driver, he worked out a couple of "sawbuck" pack-saddles, put on cinches and sling-ropes, and sacked up provisions, in preparation for their camping party.

"This is to be no 'hippodrome,'" he said. "We hit the trail right here, with all our outfit; and when we camp there 's to be no running to cover."

"All right," she replied, in his favorite phrase. "I want it to be as real as possible. I want to know just how it seems to live in a tent in the wilderness."

"All I ask you to do is to keep the game-wardens off'n me. I 'll do the rest," he replied. He had not been so happy since leaving Chicago. He was living in pleasant memories of the past, and the charm of Mary's presence wrought upon him with equal power.

She was bewitchingly girlish as she followed Jim about, with fair hair blowing round her flushed cheeks, her eyes shining with excitement. She rushed on errands, she ordered canvas, ropes, cooking-utensils, with the enthusiasm of a boy, unmindful of how her actions might be interpreted; and when she

grew tired and said, "Come, let us walk," or "Let us ride," he dropped his tools obediently.

"You 're the boss," he often said. "If you say picnic, I 'm ready."

"What 's to be the end of this?" asked Mrs. Robertson of Will, one day as they stood observing Mary and Jim from the library window.

"Heaven knows; I don't. It 'll end all at once, like the fall of a house of cards, when it does end."

Jim was seated on a bench beside the drive, busied with a saddle, and Mary, with hands folded, sat watching him like a girl whose doll is being mended.

"I hope it won't hurt him too deeply," said Mrs. Robertson.

"As Jim says, I reckon he won't be the only one hurt."

"What does she mean? It is impossible for her to marry him."

"Nothing is impossible with Mollie," Will calmly replied. "She insists that Jim understands her perfectly, and that he knows she cannot think of marriage."

"She should not encourage him on any

basis. Her freedom with him is amazing. Can't you stop it?"

"Stop it! You know Mary?" She nodded soberly. He went on: "Well, when you ask me to step in between Mollie and this mountaineer, I must beg to be excused. She is two years my senior and has always done with me as she well pleased, and I can't begin to govern her at this late date. Mother used to be able to guide her, but now — she 's the head of the house!"

In the intervals of his labor, Jim galloped over the moors with Mary, he in loose blue shirt, dark trousers belted with cartridge-belt, the Australian sombrero on his head. Every one stared, of course, but Mary merely said: "Jim, we are a blessing to the countryside. My neighbors will have their knowledge of men vastly extended by your visit."

Jim was interested in the occasional farms which they passed on the lower levels, and often stopped to have a word with the men working in the fields. "They 're too blame respectful," he said once. "They 're like niggers. I don't like to see a white man cringe; it 's bad enough in a black. I s'pose they think they 're using the English language.

Now we don't; we 're talkin' United States. Funny thing — your workmen seem like foreigners, but your rich neighbors here act a good deal like Americans."

"In what way?" asked Mary, always delighted to get Jim's impressions.

"Why, you just meet and say 'Howdy,' man to man, like we do; but all the rest cringe, and hold out a paw for a penny. Seems like only you rich people stand for anything."

"We are not rich people," protested Mary; "we 're only the well-to-do classes. Besides, we 're Irish — don't forget that."

"Well, if you 're only well-to-do, I 'd like to see how your aristocrats live."

"You would n't like their ways; they are quite stupid — a good many of them, at least. They 're weighed down by the dignities they think have been solemnly committed to their care. They are by no means cheerful company. However, when we go back to town I 'll introduce you to one or two I chance to know."

In one of their rides they selected a camping-place deep in a valley in the moor, and Will made arrangements with the landlord for the privilege of setting up a tent there.

It was a wilder surrounding than Jim had believed it possible to find in England. On all sides but one the hills rose ruggedly, covered with gorse,— "mesquite," Jim called it,— a bleak, singular land with only an occasional donkey or lean cow feeding therein. A small stream, rising from several dark, slow springs, flowed silently through peat-bogs to the north. Down this valley several farm-houses could be seen, but they were dull-colored and quite inconspicuous. It was a spot sometimes used by gipsies, and the knowledge of this helped to make the idea of camping there less startling to the farmers. To reach this place it was necessary to descend a steep hill over a maze of cow-paths winding about among the clumps of furze and gorse. Altogether, Jim found it most gratifyingly wild, and was reminded of the Texas flats when riding over it.

VII

JIM LEADS A PACK-TRAIN OUT UPON THE MOOR

AT last all was ready for the start; but Twombly was delayed, and did not reach Wyndhurst till Wednesday noon. He came in holiday mood, however, and promised to be a little more manageable than before. He manifested genuine interest in Jim's tinkered-up pack-saddles, and joined heartily in the proposed trip, which he called a "jolly original sort of game, y' know."

Dinner that night was taken up with talk of the mountains and trailing. Mary skilfully led Jim to talk of his mine, and how he found it, and what he did with it; and Twombly listened with growing interest.

At nine o'clock, however, Jim abruptly said: "Well, folkses, this won't do. We must turn in early to-night. We hit the trail at sun-up to-morrow."

Mrs. Robertson looked alarmed. "Sun-up! Do you mean before breakfast?"

"Oh, no; we 'll catch a snack before we saddle; but the train moves at sun-up, sure thing."

"But why so early?" she queried timorously.

"Well, if you want to tackle the real business it 's got to be did. I 'm putting this through according to Hoyle."

Mary firmly supported him: "Certainly; we must obey our guide when we are deep in the wilderness. Think how interesting it will be to see the sun come up. Grace, when did you ever see the sun rise?"

Mrs. Robertson considered. "Eight years ago, when my father was so ill."

"Eight years! What a city heathen you are! I see it rise often — at least once every year, when I first come down here, because the cocks' crowing disturbs me."

"Where are we to go?" asked Twombly.

"That 's a secret. We 've arranged for it, and nobody is to know but Jim. We set forth as if into unknown seas."

"That 's right," said Jim. "This trip has nothing fancy about it. Another thing: you

leave soft drinks and plug-hats behind. It 's a case of beans and bacon — and slickers, from now till the first of October."

"And the first one who complains is to be fined one pound," added Mary.

"That 'll be you, Mollie," said Will.

"I 'll bet forty to one she don't," replied Jim. "She 's the kind that stays right by till kingdom come."

Mary turned a grateful glance upon him. "Thank you, Jim. You, at least, appreciate me."

"It 's a case of going to bed with the thrushes if you get up with the blue jays," Jim further remarked, as he rose to his feet. "You 'll hear me stirring around about daylight. I 'll be out helping your yaller-legged hired men rustle the broncos. Good *night!*" he ended, and unceremoniously went to bed.

Mrs. Robertson gasped. "Well, this certainly is the most extraordinary situation I can conceive of. He tosses us about as if we were dolls in his game."

"It will make a fine chapter in your novel, Mollie," said Will.

Twombly was delighted with Jim's manner. "He has the air of being the 'real thing,' as

Robertson says. It behooves us as mighty hunters, Brien, to be up at dawn to help him inspan, as they say in Africa. I wonder what the fellow really is — is he playing a game with us all? He appears uncommonly like one of these American jokers."

"Stop discussing my partner and go to bed, everybody; and wear your plainest clothing to-morrow — no golf-stockings or -coats. We must look as much like gipsies as possible. Jim will be very critical of us when we appear at the breakfast-table."

"I wish the doctor were here," sighed Mrs. Robertson.

"Oh, we 'll have him over on Sunday. You would n't get any comfort from him; he would join in with Jim. You 'll see him at camp."

"If we hold out so long," Will slyly interposed; and the party broke up and went to bed, though reluctantly.

MARY was sleeping blissfully deep in her dainty bed when a firm knock on her door startled her into dazed wakefulness.

"Five o'clock, little pard. I 'm going out to wrangle the horses. Set out the grub-

pile, and have the coffee steaming hot. We 'll get a move on ourselves right after."

"All right, Jim," she called. His cheery phrase was coming to be ready speech to her. As she heard his rapid walk through the hall and out into the yard, something elementally sweet and primitive filled her mind. Here was the fundamental relation of men and women — helpmates, toilers: the man striding out into the dawn to his toil, the woman preparing his food. At that moment it seemed not merely possible, but most desirable and beautiful, that she should go forth with him into the New World as his helper, his housewife. It would be a sure and exquisite daily pleasure to look into his face, to listen to his coming. He was handsome, he was sincere, he moved her.

She laid the fingers of her right hand on her left wrist, and smiled to find her pulse accelerating. "You little fool!" she said, and sprang from her bed to knock at Mrs. Robertson's door.

Will was in the dining-room window with Jim, looking out at the horses, when she entered. The trailer greeted her gravely: "How are ye, pardner? Up for all day?"

"Yes, indeed; and ready for any trials."

"Time we top the range you 'll be ready to camp."

Mrs. Robertson came in yawning and languid. "I feel very strange," she said smilelessly. "I feel as if somebody were sick in the house. I can't eat any breakfast at this dreadful hour. I don't like the overture to your play, Mollie."

"Oh, this is the best part of it. I am now quite able to realize the start of a train up the Grizzly Bear trail."

"All hands down for grub," called Jim, as the servant brought in the last big covered dish. "Eat whether you like it or not. We 're due for a long drive; got to cross the snowy divide before we camp."

"By Jove! this is extraordinarily worth while, you know," said Twombly, as he burst into the dining-room, rubbing his hands together briskly. He was in gray bicycle-suit, with high, light-colored boots, such as Rocky Mountain miners wear.

The others eyed him with pitying amusement as he awkwardly shuffled about the sideboard for a dram of whisky.

"Will I do, think?" he asked, as he put down his glass.

"Yes; I reckon you 'll do," Mary cheerily

replied. "You look like a caricature of Jim; but it 's the best we could expect of a thoroughgoing Devonshire man."

Twombly laughed uneasily, feeling himself at a disadvantage. "Ha, ha! Well, you know it was great luck, my having these hunting-boots. They really are Canadian manufacture. I bought them to wear in Scotland last autumn. They are really very comfortable, you know, in case of wet weather."

"Sit in and eat," commanded Jim. "We 're falling behind our schedule."

Twombly meekly obeyed. Grace was still yawning and uneasy. "How queer it all seems! I feel like a housemaid, getting up at this time of the morning. What can we do to fill in the day?"

"You 'll be kept busy," said Jim. "I 'll attend to that part."

Mary was exceedingly alert. She sat at Jim's left hand, and played the part of submissive child to perfection. She referred everything to "guide," as she now called the trailer. The trampling of the horses outside continued, and their restless movement hastened the meal.

As he finished his coffee, Jim pushed back resolutely. "Is everybody fed?"

"Quite so," replied Twombly.

"We are," said Will.

"Aye, aye!" cried Mary.

"Then we hit leather. Let every man rope his pony and drag up his cinches while I throw on the packs."

"It 's exactly like a story," said Mrs. Robertson, beginning to feel the influence of the hot coffee.

"I wish it were the real thing instead," exclaimed Mary, as she rose to follow. She wore a plain riding-skirt and cap, as did Mrs. Robertson, while Will, dressed like an Australian rough rider, looked very well indeed.

When they came out into the yard they found seven horses in the hands of several perturbed grooms. Each horse had a "hackamore" of new rope, two carried pack-saddles with sling-ropes neatly coiled on the horns, and three were already saddled. They filled the brick-laid court with an uneasy trampling, which excited Mary almost to the point of shouting. The sun was not yet above the dark ridge to the east.

"Girls, grab your cayuses!" said Jim. "Twombly, you help 'em jump their saddles.

Will, you 're my assistant packer; give me a hand here with these wild-eyed broncs."

While Twombly was helping the women to their saddles, Jim led one of the sober cart-horses forward to a pile of sacks and bales of "camp stuff," and said, "Hold him a minute."

"Oh, let me watch!" cried Mary, riding near. "I want to see how you do that work."

Jim let down the rope in a loop, threw the loose end over a horn, gave a quick knot to it, and behold a little sling into which he dropped a sack. On the other side he placed a similar pack, and then, with Will's help, swung a big bale of bedding to the center. He next threw the end of a long rope with a wooden hook under the horse's belly.

"Hang to that!" he commanded. He flung a doubled end across. "Hook that!" Will did as bid. "Now cinch her up a little. No, no! run the rope the other way. That 's right!" He came round a moment later, carrying a larger loop, which went over the corners of the pack; and as he went, the rope tightened, and at last, standing at the horse's shoulder, he set his foot against the pack and pulled, and every loop tightened.

"I see, I see!" cried Mary. "Is n't it wonderful!"

"That 's the diamond hitch," said Jim, as he "pinched" the front lashings with a final knot of the rope's end.

"By Jove! that 's ingenious. So that is the hitch, is it? I never saw it done before," said Twombly, in high admiration. "It is jolly clever. I 've read about it in American novels."

His wonder increased as Jim slung upon the other horse bales, tinware, boxes, and camp-stools, throwing over them all a folded tent.

"It 's juggling with feathers and cannon-balls, is n't it?" said Will to Jim.

"We pack anything from a sack of flour to a steam-boiler," he replied. "It 's a little science all by itself. Now I 'll show you another trick. I 'll pack my saddle-horse," he said, as he drew the knot on the second horse. In a few minutes, by an ingenious arrangement of ropes, he placed upon the American saddle (which Mary had bought for him) a load about as varied as those upon the other horses. "Now, then, are you all set?" he asked. "Then fall in. I will lead

with two pack-horses; Mary, you come next, and Mrs. Robertson third. Twombly, you are to lead the third pack-horse, and Will brings up the rear. *Hy-ak!*"

And so, with all the servants staring in a stupor of wonder, Jim led the way through the garden gate out upon the moor, which looked wild and bleak in the morning light. The lazy old cart-horses that bore the packs lifted their heads and sidled along under their singular burdens, as awkward as camels, while the saddle-horses pranced with excitement, and Mrs. Robertson clung to her saddle in dismay.

"Keep in line! Keep the trail!" called Jim; and as he looked back at the little train winding along the path, his heart swelled big with the memories the scene called up. Putting away the houses and the hedges, the moor was not unlike some of the sage-bush-covered hills of the dry country, and the party not widely different from the ethnological explorers he had once led into the hills west of San Ildefonso. He was bitterly homesick for the moment, and the play became a burden.

But Mary's delight in it all cleared his eyes of reminiscent shadow, and in much better

form than he had expected they made slow and devious way over the big ridge, and halted on the side of the steep slope toward the camping-place. He had led them by the most circuitous path in order to prolong the journey, stopping occasionally to tighten a cinch or to explain some manœuver of the march.

"You see yon clump of willows?" he said, pointing away with a gesture which symbolized miles of travel. "We must make that before we loosen cinches. Keep a tight rein, and don't ride the pommel of your saddle. Set your weight into the stirrups. In the steep places you girls had better ride man-fashion. Be careful the ponies don't scrouge against the trees. All ready? Hy-ak—boys! Hike!"

The sun was shining, the larks twittering innumerably, and the party most thoroughly awake and merry of voice. As they went zigzagging down the slope, even Grace got a thrill of the excitement which kept Mary chattering with joyous vehemence.

"Was anything ever so absurd?" she asked.

"This is n't far from the real thing," said Will. "My own experience in the bush tells

me that Jim is giving us a first-class imitation of wild things."

"By Jove! who would have supposed we could have been got to set out on a delightfully idiotic expedition like this? This man's seriousness is convincing," Twombly took early opportunity to say, and it was evident that Jim's stock was rising in value. His skill with rope and saddle made a strong appeal.

Thus far few people were abroad to be amazed at Jim's pack-train; two or three farmers and a couple of early bicyclers only had stopped to stare; and for this comparative freedom from observation Mrs. Robertson was particularly grateful. She alone of all the group suffered from the thought of how this performance would seem to the outsider or to her city friends.

"Halt!" commanded Jim. "Girls will keep their saddles a second or two. Twombly, bring up your pack-pony."

In a short time the packs were on the ground, the ropes neatly coiled, and the horses picketed to the trees. "We 'll let 'em stand for a while, then we 'll run 'em back over the hill to feed. Twombly, you rustle some water while I get a fire going."

Under his swift command the tents were set, the packs set in place, and a fire crackling. No detail was omitted. The lesson was to be as complete as possible in the circumstances.

Suddenly it broke upon Mrs. Robertson that they were out in the open air at the mercy of the earth and sky. "Would n't it be dreadful if it should rain?" she asked, with a shudder.

"By Jove! it would be nasty, that!" said Twombly, looking up at the sky. "I don't think it will."

Mary looked at Will and laughed. "It always rains when one is living in a tent. It 's so nice to hear the rain pattering over one's head as one goes to sleep."

Mrs. Robertson echoed this word. "Sleep! You surely are not in earnest about staying here overnight!"

"We can't help ourselves. Our guide is inexorable, and we could n't find our way back without him."

A little later, when alone with Mary in the tent, Mrs. Robertson said: "Mollie, it is quite impossible for us to stay here overnight. Why,"— here she lowered her voice,— "we can't dress or undress — or anything!"

"Did you think people carried bath-rooms and brass bedsteads on the trail?" asked Mary.

Mrs. Robertson did not perceive the humor of this. "I never thought much about it. It was all very obscure, and belonged to the world of men."

"That 's just why I 'm so pleased. I 'm getting an insight into the man's world. How can I widen my thinking?— that is what interests me now. Jim is opening up new territory to me. I am tired of gardens; I want mountain-peaks and grizzly bears. I 'm having sensations every moment or two, and I 'm deeply grateful to Jim."

She lolled on a pile of blankets, looking up at the tent-roof.

"Is n't it gloriously savage to be living in a tent! How frail it seems! and yet Jim says he has camped in deep winter snow with only a little tent like this to shelter him. How little we know of life, after all — we women."

"Girls, are you getting hungry?" inquired Will. "If you are, come out and see Jim cook his beans."

Mary left off her rhapsody, and they all

went out to look at Jim. Over a red little fire, built in a trench, he had swung a kettle on a long pole, one end of which was thrust into the sod, while the other rested in a low crotch. Near the small end a forking branch caught and held the kettle's bail. Jim was intently examining his stores and utensils while his pot boiled.

As the women drew near he shook a slab of bacon in the air, and tossed it back into the heap. "That will save our lives yet — there 's nothing so good on the trail."

Mrs. Robertson shuddered. "Good heavens! Does he think we 'll eat bacon after seeing it handled thus?"

"I am prepared to eat anything that Jim gives me," said Mary. "He is my guide, consoler, and friend."

"You 're putting yourself quite into his hands," insisted Mrs. Robertson.

"I might fall into worse."

"You ridiculous creature!"

"Not at all. It is never ridiculous to acquire wisdom. It 's worth being hurt just to achieve a new conception of life. Jim's attitude is new to me. It is worth while, and I am hoping to acquire it; that is all."

Twombly got out his rod and prepared to go fishing. "Did you arrange with the manor about that?" he asked of Mary.

"Certainly. Don't fail to bring us some trout to go with Jim's bacon. If you don't, Grace will starve."

"Depend on me," he stoutly replied. "I am a redoubtable fisherman — at least, in theory."

Will was commissioned to take the horses down to the near-by farm in relays and get them stabled. Mrs. Robertson retired to her tent in order to catch up on her sleep, and Mary was left to follow Jim around like a child as he put the camp to rights. He was intent, handy, and silent, and came as near ignoring Mary as any one ever did; for the business of pitching the camp brought back the good days on the trail, and made him think of Ramsdell, and of Bessie also. The Ramsdells became very sweet and reposeful, and more and more worth while by contrast with the worrisome peculiarities of Twombly and Mrs. Robertson.

"How long does it take the beans to cook?" Mary broke silence to inquire.

"A couple o' days. On the trail we soak

'em one night and boil 'em two — about six hours in all, I reckon."

"What are you doing now?"

"I 'm going to make some 'sinkers.'"

"Sinkers?"

"Yes; kettle-bread — dough-balls."

Mary laughed. "Is that your nice name for them? I 've been wondering what you do for bread. Of course you could n't carry enough with you. Do you carry biscuit?"

"Well, no; it 's all you can do to carry raw material."

He put some flour in a big pan, and after adding some baking-powder, began stirring it with a stick. Later he poured in some water, and the loaf began to form. At last he threw away the stick, and putting a big fist into the dish, began to knead the gluey mass.

"I think I ought to call Grace," said Mary; "she 'd like to see you make bread."

"I reckon she 'll eat better if she don't," he replied gravely. "I had a feller once with me on a trip that fussed about his grub the first day or two; but he come to it about the fourth day out — was glad to eat anything."

When the flour was all taken up, Jim patted

the loaf into shape, and seizing a shovel, dug a slanting wall toward the fire, against which he set the skillet containing the dough. "Now watch and you 'll see her puff up," he said, and together they kept watch upon it.

As the loaf began to swell and to darken under the blaze, Jim seized the handle of the skillet, and by a skilful jerk of his wrist made the dough whirl in the pan until the browned side was uppermost. When the whole of one side was toasted, he tossed the loaf in air and caught it, unbaked side up, whereat Mary clapped her hands in acknowledgment of his skill.

"Beautiful! May I try it?"

"I guess not. It 's too heavy for your little hands."

He soon had bread enough, and set about the dinner. "Dinner comes at twelve on the trail," he said, "and I reckon you 'll all be ready for it."

"I 'm ready now," she replied; "I am eager to try your cooking."

He sliced the bacon, set the potatoes to boil, and stewed some dried apricots. "This is a real trail dinner," he explained.

Long before the potatoes were ready to

serve, all his party were standing about, observing him wistfully; and when at last the coffee-pot began to boil and Twombly's trout had browned with the bacon in the pan, even Mrs. Robertson admitted that the meal promised well.

"Trouble is, you did n't ride far enough," protested Jim. "If you 'd been over about twenty miles of mountain trail you 'd ask no questions."

They really ate as if hungry. Twombly and Will consumed two servings of the bacon and trout, and Mrs. Robertson said, "It tastes better than I feared." They drank their coffee without milk, and the bread was a "difficult proposition"; but, on the whole, dinner was finished in the best of spirits.

"We are real trailers now," said Mary, as she rolled up her sleeves to help Jim with the dishes, while Twombly and Will smoked pipes and fed the fire to keep the beans boiling. Mary was very alluring to Jim at this moment — more potent than at any other time; for she seemed realizable, seemed in the circle of his arm, and a willing prisoner.

She maintained her interest in the camp, and chattered on about their plans. "I wish

that farm-house were not so close; and we 'll have visitors this afternoon, too. I 'm sorry, for I wanted to have you all to myself. Suppose we go riding? There 's another valley I 'd like you to see. Will you?"

"After the beans are done," he replied in a matter-of-fact way. "Can't afford to let 'em boil dry."

Mrs. Robertson asked Twombly to go with her to the farm-house to purchase some cream. "We can't drink coffee without cream," she said privately to Mary. "But don't let our guide know; he would regard it as a weakness."

"Don't engage board down there," replied Mary, laughing. "I know you 're on the verge of deserting camp."

As she came back to Jim she said, "You 've no idea what a sociologic upheaval it is, our getting permission to camp here and burn these twigs. The things which seem natural and easy to you in Colorado are destructive here."

"I know it; that 's why I can't stand England. I 'm like a bronco in a buggy; I want to bust a thill every time I feel the rein. I suppose I 'd get used to it in time, but it would be a lifetime."

Working together side by side with bared arms, the two fell into alluring intimacy. Mary was a-quiver with the novelty of the situation and the magnetism of the trailer's reticent and suggestive presence. There was a note of melancholy in his voice as he said:

"This makes me hone for the West. I 've no more business being over here than a Piute. I might 'a' known I 'd make a failure of it. I *did* know it, and I told the doc so; but he was so plumb certain I could do the thing, he fooled me into it. Every time I look at that camp-fire and see them beans a-bubblin', I 'm crazy to take the back trail; now that 's the honest fact."

"Is n't that rather ungracious to me?" she asked archly.

"If I could take you along that would settle it; I 'd go to-morrow," he replied, rising to his full height and looking down at her with a keen glance.

"Thank you, sir; you are improving," she said, with a courtesy. Then, with a sudden turn to fury, she said: "No, you 're not; you 're losing a little of your good, blunt self. I 'm sorry you said that. You must n't talk to me like other men; if you do, I won't like

you any more. I want you to be yourself; you must n't do as other men do."

Jim looked at her with eyes which scared her a little. When he spoke his voice was low and firm. "See here, little woman, you 're just a little too swift for me. When I think I 've got my hand on you, you go up a bank or drop into an arrojo, and I don't follow. But you want to go careful. No woman that ever lived can make game of me — not for a little minute. Don't you think it."

She bowed her head to his protest and meekly said, "Forgive me, Jim." He did not immediately reply, and she laid her small hand on his arm. "You will, won't you? I did n't mean to lecture you."

"I 'll see how you perform during the rest of the evening," he grimly replied. He could n't have told what she had done, but something in her voice and manner had roused him. For a moment he suspected her of double dealing with him, and he added:

"Whatever else you do with me, don't you try to use the forked tongue. I 'm Indian enough to mighty quick tell when a woman is lying. Just when you think you 've got me guessin', I 'll fool ye. There are a whole lot

of things I don't know, and don't want to know; but don't you size me up for a farm-hand."

"You 're a man!" she said passionately, with her eyes fearlessly looking into his. "A big, free, honest, sincere man; and I want you to remain so. Go on! Shatter all our conventions and prejudices and foolish customs. I like you best when you are savage. You walk through our traditions as if they were mist; you don't even see them. Beat me, bruise me, trample me; but don't pay me compliments! I love your plainness of speech. I believe in you. You are real. Oh, if I only dared escape,— if I could,— but I must not dream of it; I am a part of London, and must live and die in it."

He listened to her incoherent outburst gravely, and his face softened. "Something has hurt you mighty bad, little pardner. It don't seem reasonable that anybody would do you harm, but I can see they have, and I 'm sorry." He laid his hand on her shoulder. "If I can do you any good — "

He had forgotten where they stood, but she had not, and with a sudden impulse she withdrew from the weight of his hand and ran

into the tent. For the moment her culture, her modernity of thought, her knowledge of the world, availed nothing. A strong, simple, manly soul had put her where she really belonged — among the piteous, the sick ones of the earth. It was not a new mood with her, but it came with added intensity at this time.

It startled her to have this man of the mountains read her to the soul when she was not only patronizing him, but pretending to security and happiness. He perceived and pitied her mental disquietude; and when her inner heart bled with its hidden wound, he knew it, and loved her, and tried to comfort her as a big brother might solace a little sister in agony. After all, why not accept his love? Nothing but the devotion of a good man was worth while, after all.

She remembered with a twinge of self-contempt her original intention to use him as material for a novel. "I might as well try to harness the west wind," she said to herself. Her respect for him deepened as she recalled his firm, clear voice and quiet eyes. "He represents the centrifugal force of civilization, as I embody the centripetal. Society in cen-

tralizing grinds a certain proportion of us to dust! Jim is not yet in the grasp of the maelstrom, while I — nothing interests me at this moment but this big mountaineer; and he is my certain sorrow."

VIII

JIM DEMANDS A REASON

MARY was napping when Jim woke her by cheerily calling, "Wrangle your horses!"

Springing up hastily, she rubbed her cheeks furiously to remove all trace of tears, and when she appeared outside the tent was as radiant as if no cloud had passed over her mental sky.

"I 've had a delicious doze. Now for our ride. Are you ready?"

"Yes. Will is to watch the beans. Don't let 'em boil dry," he said in warning.

Together they walked down to the farm-house, where they found Mrs. Robertson taking tea with the farmer's wife, quite in the way of the patronizing city visitor. "Oh, you traitor!" cried Mary.

Mrs. Robertson had a mysterious smile on

her face. "I 've engaged a bed," she whispered.

Mary was indignant. "You shall not sleep here. It would be disgraceful."

Jim saddled the horses, and brought them around to the door just as Mary had drawn a reluctant promise from Mrs. Robertson that she would remain in camp. Again Jim lifted Mary to the saddle, and the firm grip of his hand on her ankle, as he set her foot in the stirrup, made her flush, though he was apparently without design.

He swung into his saddle with easy grace, saying: "Now, pardner, you show me the trail. I 'm a passenger this trip."

Mary's face shone. "Will you trust to my guidance?"

"I reckon so; but I always keep my eyes open, and break a twig once in a while, so I can know where I went in at," he replied; and more than one meaning lay in his hunter's phrase.

Together they rode away down the valley, past little pastures inclosed by flowering hedges, wherein lazy cattle and sheep grazed with placid content, and crossing a canal-like brook, they climbed the high ridge to the

east, where the chalk-white thoroughfare ran, speckled with bicyclers drifting along in flocks like birds upon the wind. Turning aside from this highway, Mary followed a bridle-path through the furze and heather down into a circular valley, somewhat similar to the one in which their camp was pitched. There she drew rein, and Jim, dismounting, led his horse up to Mary and curtly asked:

"Want to get off?"

For answer she shook her foot from the stirrup, and he put his right arm around her and lifted her from the saddle to the ground.

"You 're about as big as a pint of soap."

She laughed. "That 's very expressive, but it is n't very nice."

He made no reply, but looked away at the sky-line with a peculiar and unwavering directness that was like the aim of a rifle. His attitude and profile were superb, and her heart quickened as she studied him. With the trailer's keen, far-reaching eye, he had caught some animal's movement on the hill-side. The habits of years of life on the trail were not easily to be laid aside.

"I suppose that must have been a fox," he said.

"I see nothing; but there are foxes about here, I believe."

"I thought it was a coyote at first; then I knew it could n't be, of course. Never saw a coyote, I reckon? Well, they 've sung me to sleep ever since I was a kid. I never got clear of 'em till I jumped the train for Chicago. I like to hear 'em. If one should yap right now, I 'd jump clean over your horse."

"What are they like?"

"They 're a small wolf — a kind of half-breed between a fox and a wolf. They 're always hungry, and always thin as a match. But they are wonderful chaps; they sure are so. The Injuns all think the coyote is a sort of magician. Sure thing! They say 'coyote big medicine-man all same spirit,' and he certainly is queer. I never got to the bottom of him. He 's always lookin' for something he 's lost, and his voice at sunrise sometimes is like a woman cryin' over a dead child. He 's a mysterious pup, and no two ways about it; he and the loon are a pair to draw to and beat the world. I 've camped before now on the edge of a lake with a couple o' loons on one side of me and a coyote on the other, and had more fun than an insane

asylum. But see here; this won't do! I got off here to ask you something. That fox switched me off on a side trail. Are there many women like you?"

"I hope not," she replied bitterly. "Why?"

"Nothin'; only you keep me guessin' right straight along. I don't pretend to know many women, and those I do know are purty measly. A man like me don't have a chance to meet-up with women like you. There are a whole lot o' things about you I don't savvy. I don't see why you 're not as happy as a bobolink. Mebbe it 's all due to that feller buried down there in the sand in Africa. Anyhow, I 'd like to know what makes you talk against your own people, and take up with an old two-fisted miner like me. Out with it, now. What 's your little game? Are you havin' fun with me? You can't play me, my girl, without giving an account of yourself. What did you get me down here for, anyway? Now be honest about it."

She was leaning against her horse, and her eyes were on the ground. Suddenly she looked at him timidly, and said tremulously:

"Because I like you, Jim, and I wanted to know you better."

"Well, then, come back to the mountains with me."

She flared out like a flame, "Oh, I can't do that, Jim."

He put his big hand on her shoulder again, awkwardly, caressingly.

"Why not?"

"Oh, I can't tell you; it 's just impossible, that 's all."

"You hate everything here, so you say. You want to see the high country, you tell me. Now, why not do it? I 'll take care o' you; you won't need to worry about that. Of course I can't give you such a home as you have here, unless the mine pans out; if it does—nothing 's too good for you."

She took a seat on a bank beside a clump of furze. "Sit down, Jim; I want to talk to you. I can't say what I want to while we stand."

He tethered the horses to a shrub, and dropped on the grass at her side. She nervously took up and broke small twigs as he waited. When she spoke her voice was low, but it was firm.

"You can't understand women like me, Jim. You 're too sane and elemental; your world is too simple. If you understood our disease, even imaginatively, I would n't like you any more. I know what you mean when you ask me to share your life. But I distrust myself and this mood in which I find myself. If I thought it would last, I might—but it would not. Our worlds are too wide apart; I could n't fit into your life, and I would n't under any condition ask you to fit into mine. It would be wicked to transform you into a citizen of London, if I could; and of course I could n't. You 'd die here; you could n't live as we do. I can see now that I 'm going to be very sorry when you leave England. You have captured my imagination—you 've done more than that. If I were younger I might adjust myself to your ways; but now it is impossible—quite impossible."

"I 'm going to be rich," he said quietly. "It is n't a question of living in Wagon Wheel. You could live anywhere — in the high country, anyhow."

"I know — I know; you 'd do everything you could for me. But it is n't that. Even in a man-

sion your life would be so simple, I am afraid of it. I both hate and love the things that surround me; even the things I loathe most are an inescapable part of me. I 'm a bond-woman. I have moods when the city, with its constant, conventional demands, becomes unendurable; but after a few weeks at the sea or down here, I become restless, and hurry back to the same old round of activities we call gaieties. Nothing interests me for long. Everybody bores me, except you and Will. The fact is, I 'm sick and in bondage."

"Mebbe I can set you free," he said, laying his hand on her wrist — a tender and chivalric caress. "The mountains would do you good. It 's mighty fine business to climb the Grizzly Bear trail."

She shivered with emotion, but shook her head. "No, no; it is madness to think of it. Moreover, I 'm not worthy a big, wholesome man like you. I 'd only torture you. I am selfish and greedy. Since Joe died I 've been careless of the feelings of men; I was remorseless till I met you." She hesitated only a moment. "I intended to amuse myself with you — that 's the plain truth. You did n't bore me. You were good 'copy,' as

the journalists say. Now I find myself hurt. You are bigger than I thought you were. I fancied you would be good game; you end by mastering me. When you go I 'm going to be sorry—but the memory of you will be good. Now I have confessed, you may strangle me. I deserve it." She looked up at him with a look of fearless question. "What are you going to say?"

His eyes were like those of a beautiful and kindly animal as he looked at her in deep thought. He pitied her without understanding her. When he spoke it was in a musing tone.

"One year Ramsdell brought a feller out from the States who talked just about as queer and as slick as you do. It looked like he was scheduled to go over the Big Divide at the end of a week. 'Jim, what 'll we do with him?' asks the doc. 'Put him to work on the trail,' I said. 'Give him something else to think about besides his lungs.' 'I don't know but you 're right,' he says. 'I turn him over to you.' I took him on a trip I was making over in the West Elk range, and I abused that feller. I used to roust him out o' bed before sun-up, and hammer him up

and down the hills till he was so dead tired he could n't wag a leg. He stopped his queer talk, and eat three full meals a day. Little pardner, what you need is work — just good, old-fashioned buckling right to it. You want to have something to do every day, and do it hard, and get hungry and leg-weary. That will cure you."

She smiled, and shook her head. "Work is a sovereign remedy, but it won't cure me."

"That 's what that one-lunger said; but it did. He got so blame sassy toward the last that I had to mighty near turn in and lam his head. Now if you were to enter new territory with me you might get a new grip on things."

She wearily rose. "The sky is getting gray; we must return."

He said nothing further on that line, and they rode back to camp in almost complete silence. His masterful reticence again made her afraid of him even while she admired him. He could shut his mouth like a steel trap when his cue for silence came.

IX

JIM BREAKS CAMP ON THE MOOR

THEY found Mrs. Robertson at camp, profoundly alarmed at the growing grayness of the sky. Night now assumed a terror it had never possessed before.

"Has n't this gone far enough, Mollie?" she asked anxiously. "It is impossible that we are to sleep here in the midst of this wild field."

"I 'm sure our tent looks very inviting; besides, our sensations are only just begun. I want to feel the darkness pressing round me, and I want to hear the rain on the tent. Jim says it is a lovely sound. Then I want to wake in the night and fancy I hear the wolves howling. Our trip would be a failure if we failed to sleep in camp."

Mrs. Robertson shuddered. "I can't understand your depraved tastes. They are not normal."

The supper was less cheerful than the midday meal, for Jim made no effort to lighten it. He ate in silence, and cleared away the dishes alone, while the women, wrapped in thick rugs, sat in the door of the tent and watched him. Twombly and Will smoked while sitting humped before the fire as nearly in the attitude of red men as they knew how. Altogether, the evening was oppressive — not at all the jolly camping party Mary had expected it to be; yet she knew the fault was her own.

When the camp was in shape for the night, Jim lighted his pipe and took his seat beside the fire also. There was an indefinable grace and distinction in his manner, as he took his place beside the fire, which did not escape Mary's keen eyes. The slant of his hat was just right, and his strong, stern profile had in it something of the serene dignity of the Sioux.

As the night began to fall the fire sparkled with a keener light. To Mary's mind it seemed to take on new passion and added power like a nocturnal animal. The sky grew thick and dark, but the wind died down and the threatened rain did not come.

Suddenly Twombly said: "This mine, now,

Matteson; are there some good properties near — something one might reason from?"

Jim did not instantly reply, and when he did his voice was cold and his accent indifferent.

"There are six million dollars' worth of properties on the same hill, and it 's my notion that we 're in line to strike the Concordia vein. Of course that 's my notion; I can't prove it till we push a little deeper into the hill. The formation there is a little skew-geed, and we may not hit it."

Twombly seemed afraid of committing himself, and only said: "It 's a large sum to put in without an assurance of something coming out."

"If we had the security you want we would n't sell at all. It 's all a gamble," said Jim, putting up his pipe. "Come, girls, you 'd better turn in; this fog seems likely to grow up into a rain."

"Oh, let us sit up, Jim. I like to sit here and watch you and the fire; it makes me feel like a squaw — or something prehistoric."

Mrs. Robertson moaned. "I wish I were back in Wyndhurst. I shall be ill of a cold to-morrow; I know I shall."

"I 'll see that you don't take cold," said

Jim, coming to the tent. "Where is your candle?"

After lighting the candle, he set to work at the bed. "You want the bulk of your blankets beneath you," he said; "the cold comes up from below when the ground is damp. In the mountains, in the fall, the ground is warmer than the air, and you want to keep close to it. A big rock will hold the heat all night — there you want the cover over ye, but here it 's the cold below that 'll make your bones ache."

After he had rearranged the bed, he handed the candle to Mary. "I reckon you 've got 'kiver' enough. Good night!"

"Good night, Jim!"

Jim dropped the flap of the tent and tied the string. "If you hear a bear nosin' around during the night, just let him alone and he 'll go off. The coyotes may begin to yelp about midnight; but they 're harmless, too."

Mrs. Robertson was not amused, and after Jim went away she said: "I think his pleasantry is ill-judged. I know I shall not sleep a wink under these conditions, and I 'm perfectly certain I shall hear a whole menagerie of wild beasts during the night."

"I am blissful, resigned," Mary dreamily replied. "I wish I could be scared; but I 'm not: I 'm only sleepy. If an elephant trumpeted I would n't hear him."

"Oh, what is that?" Mrs. Robertson turned to inquire with wild eyes.

A low, muffled, hollow wail arose in the darkness outside. It mounted to a howl, then died suddenly away, only to rise again, wild, sorrowful, hungry, appalling, and savage. It stiffened both women in terror, and Mary shuddered with exquisite horror. The cry rose like the moan of a big, wounded, despairing dog. It was as if a lonely forest had found voice or the hollow night had condensed itself into a cry of anguish and foreboding. At last it ended, and Twombly cried: "Bravo! Well done!"

"Oh!" cried Mary, "it is Jim; he 's determined to make the play as realistic as possible. That is the howl of the coyote, I suppose."

"I wish he were a little less solicitous about his play. He gave me a terrible fright. My heart is thumping so hard I can hardly breathe. If I live till morning I shall certainly go back to London and stay there. I 'm not fitted to be a hunter of wild animals."

Mary laughed and called out: "Was that the coyote, Jim?"

"Well, not exactly," he replied. "That was the timber-wolf when he is hungry and the snow beginning to fall. I 'll give you his signal when he sees game and wants company." He uttered a different note, less mournful, but with greater carrying power. "That means, 'Come on; I need help,'" he explained. "I 'll give you the coyote song now," he called, and immediately broke forth into a singular, high-keyed, yelping clamor that made Mrs. Robertson seize Mary by the arm and grip hard.

"Ask him to stop," she gasped. "It gets on my nerves."

"That 's beautiful!" Mary called out; "but Grace is frightened nearly out of her senses. Please don't do it any more."

The men all laughed, and Jim said: "I 'd like to give you the cry o' the loon, but I reckon we 'd have the whole township a-rampin' down on us if I did. It 's bedtime, anyhow; so good night again!"

"This is all superb material for me," remarked Mary to Mrs. Robertson. "If I could only use it properly, but —"

"He might have spared us his animal show," interrupted Mrs. Robertson.

"I wish you were n't so idiotic at times, Grace. You 're going to spoil the whole trip if you keep on." This was the first note of protest which Mary had permitted herself. Her voice cut deep, and Mrs. Robertson closed her lips so tight they quivered. Mary was immediately remorseful: "Forgive me, dear; I did n't mean to be so cross." And Mrs. Robertson said: "I 'll try to bear it for your sake; but it is so foolish and dangerous to be out here and the rain coming on."

Eventually they kissed each other and went to bed friends, though Mary was amazed at the action of her companion, whom these unwonted surroundings subdued from a proud and self-contained matron to the mental stature of a nervous child.

Mrs. Robertson effectually put an end to the camping expedition. She passed a miserable night; and when Jim, imitating the far-off, liquid, flute-like wail of the coyote at dawn, roused all the camp, her mind was made up. "I cannot endure another such night," she said. "I 'm completely fagged out. I must find other ways of amusing myself."

Mary, who had slept very well the latter part of the night, looked at her and laughed. "You poor wreck! The doctor should see you now."

"Don't revile me, dear. If I look the way I feel, I must be dreadful; but you should pity me, not make game of me, after the sacrifices I 've made to your whims. I 've done a good deal for you, Mary Brien, but this is decidedly too much."

Mary yawned. "It did n't rain after all; but oh, is n't it cold outside! I 'm glad I 'm not obliged to kindle the fire and get breakfast. It really would have been cheerless this morning if it had rained during the night." She peered out. "Is n't Jim a comfort? He has a bright fire going, and coffee hot."

Mrs. Robertson drew a rug about her shoulders. "I am in perfect torture. I can neither lie down nor sit up. Every bone I possess is aching. I never had such a feeling in my life. I believe I 'm going to have pneumonia. I wish the doctor would come and take me away."

"I wish he would, dear," Mary tartly replied, as she returned to her bed.

"Well, girls!" called Jim, at the door of the

tent; and Mrs. Robertson dived beneath the coverlet, and heard no more of his morning greeting as he untied the tent-strings. "Daylight down the crick. Birds a-singin'—the night herd comin' over the hill."

Mary sprang up and began dressing. The men were talking in their tent, and Twombly was saying: "Slept like a top—a regular hummer."

"There was a hummock under my bed which began as a mole-hill and ended by becoming Mount Ararat," replied Will; "otherwise I was quite comfortable."

Before they were fairly clothed, Jim called with peculiar intonation: "*Grub-pile!* Everybody rustle and walk chalk, or the snakes 'll git ye! Wow, wow, wow—whoop!"

Every one responded but Mrs. Robertson. Mary came forth as vivid as a rain-wet pink, and with a pretty swagger walked up to the fire. "Hello, pard! Top o' the mornin' to ye!"

Jim's heart warmed to her mightily. She was so exquisite of color, and so amusing as she rubbed her little fists together before the blaze.

His greeting was mystic: "Well, now, how are they comin'?"

"Whom do you mean?"

He smiled. "Where 's the tenderfoot?"

"She 's abed. Wants her coffee brought to her."

"She 's all right," he replied in a tone that meant she was all wrong. "Mebbe she thinks this is a hotel with nigger waiters."

Mary could not help a little shiver. It was barely sunrise, and the moor was desolate and gray with morning mist. The wind was keen, and though Jim had erected a canvas wall to shield the table from its sweep, it was a cheerless breakfast-scene to a delicate woman. But Mary was too proud to show her dismay. She took her seat at the table, and made a brave show of eating the bacon and beans and the hot bread which Jim set before her amply.

The camping expedition ended right there. The day continued cold and gray, and Mrs. Robertson's coffee merely gave her courage to dress and to complain. "Mollie, you must let me go back to Wyndhurst. I *will not* stay here another hour. It 's all very well for a harum-scarum like you, but I cannot be your chaperon at such sacrifice."

Mary reluctantly asked Jim to get the

horses and send them home. "Grace has worked herself into a state of frenzy, and of course if she goes I must go too. I am sorry, but you know it is a good deal to ask of a person so conventional as Grace."

Jim took this request in good spirit.

"All right, pardner; you 're the doctor. We hit the back trail whenever you give the sign. Reckon we 've about got to the end of our rope, anyway. This kind of campin' makes me think of a horse-race in a theater show I saw in Denver once. The horses racked away hard, and the jockeys plied the quirt; but they were nailed to the floor: it was only the scenery drifting past." He smiled again, with a slow growth of little wrinkles round his eyes. "When you come out to Colorado, I 'll take you on a campin' trip where the sceneries are stationary and the horses do all the hustlin'."

The retreat was made in good order. Jim refused to divide his party, but led his little pack-train back with the same seriousness with which he had gone forth. He gravely unpacked before the door, and laid everything in its place before he finally relinquished command.

"Now I 'm a passenger again," he said as he turned away.

Mary smiled with a certain sadness as she said: "All this outfit I shall preserve in memory of you."

"They come purty near representin' me," he said, glancing back at them. "They 're the tools I know best."

He was silent at lunch. After they rose from the table he went out for a walk, and was gone till nearly dinner-time. Whether he had walked all the afternoon or not he did not say, but he had recovered his usual good humor, and laid out his maps before Twombly and for half an hour really assumed the rôle of salesman. Mary kept within ear-shot, delighting in the talk of shafts, tunnels, up-raises, free-milling ore, and questions of veins pinching out or faulting, as Jim pitted his practical experience against Twombly's theoretical knowledge.

As Mary said, "Dinner is ready," Jim, with no other sign of having heard her, rolled his papers together.

"There is the proposition. All we ask is an investigation. You take it or leave it. My comin' over here was the doc's doings.

I wanted to deal with Denver men on a small scale; but my pardner said no; it was a big thing, and London the place to get it considered. As the Indians say, 'I have spoken.'"

He was fairly companionable at the table, and told a number of stories which caused the stolid Twombly to exclaim; but to Mary's subtler sense the miner was restless and distrait. As soon as they were alone he said:

"Well, little pardner, I 'm going back to London to hustle. If you 'll have my truck packed to the station —"

"You don't mean to-night?"

"I mean this minute."

"Oh, no. Don't go to-night. I want to talk with you. I was going to propose a walk on the moor."

"Do we go alone?" he asked quickly.

She hesitated. "Why, yes — if you 'd rather."

"Then I stay," he said. "Pull on your rubber boots."

Mary had a deliciously guilty feeling as she said to Grace: "Jim and I are out for a little spin on the moor. Will you go?"

"Certainly not," was the blunt answer.

"The grass is wet, and I 'm tired. I 'm going straight to my room."

To Twombly, sunk low in his chair, enjoying his pipe, she took a different tack:

"We are going up to the old inn for a few minutes. Will you go too?"

"Thanks; not just now, if you 'll pardon me. I 'm quite like an anaconda. I shall not be able to move for an hour. You won't mind, will you?"

"Oh, not at all," replied Mary, with a righteous feeling that her duties as hostess were discharged in the letter at least. It was a keen pleasure to be alone with this unaccountable mountaineer, whose words sprang forth from the secret places of his thought like forest birds, with much noise of wings, but gentle of spirit. She was so curious to know what he wished to say that she would have dared much to take his arm in the dusk.

Without hesitation he struck out along the road which ran on the very top of the "hog-back," as he called it, and his long strides kept her trotting to keep up. He was silent at first, and too absorbed in thought to take note of her effort in keeping pace with him.

She was forced to protest:

"What a long-legged creature you are!"

He paused. "Did I strike too high a gait?"

"Mercy! I should think so. I 'm positively breathless already."

"I 'm sorry. I did n't notice. Why did n't you say so?"

"I was too proud, I reckon," she said humbly. "I wanted to be a good trailer."

"You 're too little to be anything but a ghost," he said, looking down at her. "Every little while I get a real notion of you, and then you 're nothin' but a baby. That 's what you are — a doll baby. Your head 's all right; but look at your wrists! About as big as two straws." She looked at them in the dim moonlight.

"And your neck." She put her hands to her throat. "About as big as my wrist. But the comical thing is, I would n't have you any bigger. You 've got me twisted as it is."

"What do you mean by 'twisted'?"

"What am I doin' down here? Do you know? What did I come to England for? See you? Looks like it, don't it? Nice howl I 'd get from the doc if he knew how I was putting in my time. He sends me out to

round-up some mustangs, and I stop and go to eatin' blackberries with the birds."

She laughed out joyously. "Well, maybe the mustangs will come home themselves, like Miss Bo-peep's sheep."

"Mustangs ain't built that way. You 've got to rustle and howl and cuss and throw stones and wade in the sloos before you get 'em all in. What am I doin' now — this minute? I 'm takin' a walk with a girl, when I ought to be on my way to London to sell a mine."

"Mr. Twombly will take —"

"Twombly!" His scornful tone was most emphatic. "Say, let me tell you. I 've been in a store in Wagon Wheel 'fore now, and seen women come in and paw over calico of every shade in the box, and price it all, and think hard, and then paw down another pile, and finally say, '*So* much obliged,' and go out. That 's Twombly."

He struck out again, but at a slower pace; and at last they stood on a high knoll, with a pale moon wallowing in mist overhead, and the mysterious blackness of the moon lying on either side, with only one or two lights to indicate the presence of man.

Jim straightened himself and drew a deep breath. "This is worth while. I can pretty near imagine I 'm on the top of the hog-back butte. The air here is fit to breathe."

Mary moved a little closer to him. "This is a grim old spot. In the good old days the coaches used to be stopped here by highwaymen."

"It would be a good place for a hold-up. But see here; this won't do. This air is sure chilly. Let 's take the back track."

As they reached the broad, beaten carriage-road, Jim said: "I leave here to-morrow mornin', and then it 's a case of hustle till something drops; and *then* no more England for me."

"Anyhow we 've had a pleasant week of it, have n't we?"

He did not reply, for he was thinking of roaring old London, and how much grimmer it was going to be without Mary and Will. Mary led the conversation to more impersonal topics, and they reached the house before Jim again shook off his reticence.

"I 'm mightily obliged to you, Mary. You 've tried to help me, and you sure have been a comfort to me. But when a man is a miner, and forced to whack his living out of

lumps of quartz, it stands him in hand not to forget it — not for a minute. It 's different with you and Will. Everything 's sort o' smoothed out for you. What is just common every-day life to you is a waste of time for me. So, as I say, our trails fork right here. I may strike it, and I may not. I *think* we 've got it; but gold is a mighty shy proposition. It 's where you find it; that 's all. So, as I say, I 'm much obliged. You 've tried to help me interest Twombly, and I take the word for the deed —"

"I 'll take stock myself, Jim," she eagerly interrupted, feeling the discouragement of his mood.

"No; I can't do that now," he said firmly. "Good night."

X

JIM RETURNS TO LONDON

AS the mountaineer reëntered London the next morning it was again the destructive maelstrom it seemed on his first arrival. He went back to the same little hotel, but took a larger room, and opened his box of ore samples and got out his photographs of the mine and the locality. He was obliged to draw again on his partner for funds, and it made him sick at heart to spend so much money to so little purpose. Under the spur of this feeling he began a brisk campaign. His days were torture and his evenings were lonely and very gloomy. His proud soul chafed under the neglects and insolences of lackeys, and resented the blunt questions of capitalists.

"If this is so good a venture, why do you come here? Could n't you interest men nearer home?" were questions he could not

heartily respond to, for he had never agreed with Ramsdell in this plan.

With a feeling that his relations with Mary were completely broken, he read his letters from Bessie and Mrs. Ramsdell with more interest than he had felt for some weeks. Bessie wrote very charmingly, giving all the news of the family, and expressing the great interest they were all taking in his splendid effort to save the mine. Her small, well-governed handwriting expressed the charm of her sweet and simple nature to him, and under the influence of it he wrote her a letter which filled nearly two pages of note-paper.

"Im mighty glad to hear from camp," he wrote. "Im standing on a slippery cedar-root in this big swamp, and the mud is bottomless and the snakes are thick. I dont know how Im goin to pull out, but Ill hit dry ground soon."

Ramsdell's letters had become a little urgent. "All depends on you, Jim," he wrote. "I don't want to hurry you, but don't waste time. I 'm sending the draft you asked for, but it pinches me a little. I hate to see that mine waiting out there. I 've cut down the force to six men. Get a large

hump on yourself, and pull us out o' the hole if possible. Beware of the charmer, old man. Disable the 'Earl,' and come home as quick as possible."

His former dependence upon Mary became more and more evident as he went about the streets alone during that week. He became irritable as well as reticent, and the man who took liberties with him regretted it. He was distinctly less social, and the porter and the waiters missed his former hearty greeting. Even Dr. Robertson found him difficult to draw out, and he flatly refused to come to dinner. His dislike of Mrs. Robertson was now fixed, though he was (for a moment) amused at her return to the airs and graces of a society hostess—so calm, so gracious, so patronizing. She was on her native carpet now, and could speak of "that delicious little camping trip of ours," even to Jim himself.

Mary had not for a moment intended to lose sight of her mountaineer, and toward the end of the week she wrote a little note and mailed it to his old address:

We are coming back to town on Monday. I found it too lonesome out here with my mountaineer away. Come to me for lunch at one. I want to hear how you get on.

Mr. Twombly left the same day you did — bound for Exeter, he said, to see his brother. I think he is favorable to your proposition. Don't be discouraged about him.

This letter opened up a trail he had considered locked beyond retracing. His first sound impulse was to curtly say, "I'm too busy; I can't come." But the longing to see Mary's bright face overcame him, and he scrawled a characteristic line:

Ill be there. JIM.

Once again in her presence, he surrendered himself completely to the comfort of her sympathetic smile and the charm of her voice. Her eager, searching eyes hardly left his face during lunch, and she pierced to the lowest deep of his discouragement at once.

"You can't do anything working alone that way," she said, after he had detailed a few of his discouragements. "These things go by favor — like kissing. You must make acquaintances; you must let me introduce you to nice people; you must go with Will to the clubs."

In the end she convinced him, and secured from him a promise to go to afternoon tea at

the home of a well-known editor of a weekly paper. In a word, she took charge of him again, quite ignoring his good-by on the moor, and after a week filled with rebuffs and barely civil treatment on the part of London business men, Jim found the Brien flat a very beautiful place to take refuge in. He did not entirely lose his sense of humor even under these trying circumstances. "I have n't walked so much since I went to district school in Kansas," he said once, as he came in. "I started out to see a feller who told me to 'come in again'; but when I got to his door I shied round the corner and walked back. I could n't face his clerk without killin' him. I can stand the old beefers in the inside office — if I can reach 'em; but that 's just it. To do it I 've got to throttle the little skunk who says, 'Nime and business, please.'"

When not with Mary he did not know how to employ his time. He was really waiting for Twombly to make the next advance, and while walking aimlessly about the city his mind dwelt on the Englishman's last letter, in which he said:

"I have talked your mine over with my brothers, and if I do not go to South Africa I

may go to America with you. I will let you know in a few days quite definitely. Meantime don't let any other offer wait on mine."

The plain truth was, Jim had lost all confidence in his power to do the work his partner set for him to do, and yet he could not bring himself to abandon the field and return, hundreds of dollars poorer than when he came.

Time would have hung heavily on his hands had not all his afternoons been taken up by singular social expeditions, the purport of which he did not in the least comprehend. He often drove with Mary in the park, or rode with her, training his horse to guide in the cow-boy fashion. In all ways he remained the mountaineer. Mary had no wish to see him conform to British models; on the contrary, she continued to delight in his most noticeable characteristics, and was quite indifferent to the gossip of her friends. She took him with her to call at great houses where "hired hands" in gay red-and-yellow coats stood in rows beside the doorway; and Jim shook the cold hands of thin ladies and the puffy hands of fat old gentlemen, while Mary smilingly introduced him as "Mr. Matteson of Colorado."

"What does it all lead to, pardner?" he asked once, as they were driving home from a visit of this character.

"Trust it all to me," she replied.

"I reckon I 'll have to," he said, and immediately became silent and sad. He was indeed trusting all to her; he was doing nothing on his own part now, and at times he was at the point of giving it up entirely.

During these days of trial he went to Mary, sure of an attentive ear and a radiant smile. At the start he had talked of the mountains to entertain others; now he talked of them to hearten himself. Nearly every day he called he had a new story of his old-time prospecting tours, and Mary's dilated eyes helped him to feel once more the stern presence of the shining peaks.

There were times when he had more than a suspicion that people were "having fun with him," but considered it an "even break" so long as he got a little amusement out of it himself. But when he had attended three or four precisely similar receptions, all incredibly dull, he said: "See here, little pard; I 'm willing to play horse so long as it amuses you, but I don't think you 're gettin' much out of this business yourself. How about it?"

Mary laughed. "No, I don't; but to-day I expected to have you meet an old lady we want to interest in the mine scheme. She has a son, and is eager to settle him in something."

"All right; anything to pull that hole out of the ground."

By such means she continued to exhibit him in drawing-rooms where his presence was almost as exciting as that of a Navajo medicine-man. He could not complain of any plan which kept him near Mary, whose allurement became more powerful day by day. He had given up any notion that she might go home with him; he went to see her because she pleased him — made his life less lonely and lightened his discouragements. It was a keen pleasure just to sit low in his chair and look at her. When his work for the day was done he went straight to her.

"Well, pardner, what 's the program for to-day?"

London itself became ever more hateful to him. What did it all amount to, anyway? It was nothing, he thought, but a jumble of old bricks and mortar, soaked with sweat and blood, swarming with men and women as un-

important as lice and almost as ephemeral. Set over against the peaks and the clear, cold streams of the "high country," it was a place of fever-germinating sewers and pest-houses — a place where men died under one another's eyes. Something of this he expressed to Mary one day when he came in worn with fruitless interviews.

She cordially agreed with him. "Of course you 're right. London is a wen — the wen of civilization. Civilization writhes in agony, and great cities result. But you must not let London defeat you. Forget it all when you come to me. Let 's take a gallop in the park, and fancy we 're on the trail again. I have some news for you. I saw Twombly again to-day. I think he has determined to go over and inspect the mine; but he is so stupidly sly. He prides himself on his self-restraint. By the way, we are invited to Seldon Douglass's reception Tuesday. I know you hate these things, but I 'd like you to go. There are a few people there who are worth while."

"Well, now, see here, little pardner; I 've reached the limit. I can't stand any more of —" At this moment a couple of the wide-

hatted men of the Australian militia passed the window, and he called out:

"Hello, there are some of the 'rooster-tails'! That reminds me, we have n't been over to see their camp yet, have we?"

"I 'll secure tickets at once," she replied. "Say to-morrow after lunch. Twombly is coming, and we 'll all go to Earl's Court. This afternoon I want you to go to Mrs. Semple's tea."

Jim rose, ominously stern. "Little pardner, I 'm done. Right here I quit fooling and begin to fight." He looked at her steadily. "I 've taken a hand in these teas and lunches to please you, because you said it was all right; but from this time on, you 've got to tell me the kind of a shindig I 'm galloping down into before I stir a hoof. This 'Wild West' Africa interests me a whole lot, and I want to go; but no more weak tea and old ladies for me."

Mary met this moment of rebellion with a certain pleasure, for she enjoyed the exercise of her power over him. Hitherto when she turned her smiling, arch, and subtle face upon him he had yielded. She took hold of his lapels and said: "Now, you old bear, don't

you get cross! You are going just once more to please me."

"No," he said, and his voice was harsh. "Right here the men in calico pants and me part company. I 've kept from killin' 'em so far, but I 'm ugly to-day. You 'd better not bother me. I 'm goin' to see the 'Wild West show at Earl's Court."

Mary knew when to yield. "Well, if you 're determined, we 'll cut the reception and go; but if we wait till to-morrow Twombly and Dr. Robertson may be able to go."

"All right. That goes. I 'll be on hand like a sore thumb," he replied, and turned to go.

"Wait a few minutes," said Mary, "and I 'll drive you home."

She counted on being able to regain her power over him when they were seated in the carriage; but he continued firm.

"What 's the use playing tame bear when the game is one-sided? As long as I enjoyed it we broke even. Now the fun is all on one side, like the handle to a jug. I 've got a sore ear, and the performance is a good deal like work."

"What is the cause of your sore ear?" asked Mary. "What has happened?"

"I 've had to send to Ramsdell for more money."

She was instantly sympathetic. "You must n't lack money so long as we are partners."

"I guess our pardnership is a kind of play-pardnership," he replied ungraciously.

"It need n't be. I 'll take my shares any time."

"I can't sell you stock," he replied.

"Why not?"

"Because it would n't be right," he replied, and would add no further explanation.

She put him down at his door, and said with her sweetest smile: "To-morrow, then, at lunch, and Earl's Court."

"I 'll be there; but no more teas and receptions," he replied. "It 's business from now on."

XI

THE EFFECT OF "SAVAGE AFRICA"

HE turned up at lunch next day, still in a somber mood, and Mary put forth all her charm in the effort to win him back to his frank, good self, but failed. He continued silent and preoccupied. Mrs. Robertson and Will held a lively discussion of South African politics, in which Mary finally joined, leaving Jim free to listen or not, as he pleased. He had been curiously reticent before, but nothing so near gloom.

"I feel like a man missing something," he explained to Mary. "I don't know what it is, but it 's something I need."

He was unpleasantly censorious of England and everything English. As they went out to the carriage he said, "The sun blame near makes a shadow to-day, don't it?"

"The shadow is on you," replied Mary. "I wish I could help you to shake it off."

He kept silence all the way to Earl's Court, and not till he caught sight of the brown uniforms and gray sombreros of the Australian guards on duty in the great corridor did he shake off his gloomy meditation.

"Howdy, boys, howdy!" he called to them cheerily. "How did you leave the folks at home?" The Australians recognized a fellow in him, and smilingly replied, and Jim was benefited by their replies. "By the Lord! they look good after these cussed red monkey-cap soldiers with canes."

"I hear they look like your own soldier-boys."

"They do; they look *right*. They know how it is themselves. If I had time, I 'd like to shake hands with 'em all." He contented himself with waving his hand at them with a hearty word.

As he ran swiftly through the "Greater Britain" exhibit, Jim became thoughtful. "She 's a big country," he said; "mighty big and rich. She just about covers the earth, don't she?"

Will delivered a little lecture on this theme: "Yes; one feels the width of the Empire here. Consider the names: New South Wales,

Ontario, Columbia, South Africa, Australia, India!"

Jim replied: "It 's queer. I don't understand how this little bog of an island got hold of all these countries. She 's got to use 'em mighty well or they won't stay by her."

"That 's her policy," said Will.

They met Twombly and Dr. Robertson at a certain booth, and together they crossed a sort of bridge and entered a vast auditorium, one entire side of which was covered by a curtain. The building was, in fact, a mighty oblong theater with a lofty arch, the stage of which was a sanded acre of beaten earth.

Mary was careful to have Jim take a seat beside her, in order that she might hear every word he uttered, and have the pleasure also of his near glance. Their seats were the choicest to be had, being close down to the railing of the arena, and they were much observed by the occupants of the near-by seats. Of this scrutiny Jim was the main cause, but he did not realize it as he stood for a moment studying the audience. "People are plenty as potato-bugs," he remarked, with a sigh. "Must be as many people here as there are in Wagon Wheel all told."

When the great curtain rose, disclosing a wide, wild, rocky, barren country, the mountaineer sat up with a jerk. "By the Lord Harry! that looks like Utah!" he said. "All it needs is a little sage-brush. It certainly looks good to see an empty space for a minute. I 'm seein' too many people this trip."

Loud shouts were heard, accompanied by the fierce cracking of whips, and an eight-span team of oxen drawing a big covered wagon came crawling over the plain. It was an immigrant-wagon laden with household goods and speckled with children.

"Now you 're drifting into my climate," exclaimed Jim, laying a hand on Will's knee. "That 's a prairie-schooner. These chaps are striking into the new country."

The wagon passed, leaving the scene as silent and lonely as before. Then arose a distant wild singing, "Ille-a-eo-eo-aha!" and two hundred powerful black men, armed with spears and shields, and adorned with snow-white plumes and gay beads, came marching in, their deep voices rolling in splendid, rhythmic waves from head to heel of their solemn line of march.

"That 's like the chieftains' song among

the Sioux!" Jim explained, in growing excitement. "Great Moses! but they make my hair bristle. No pink teas about this! Their feet are on the earth."

The blacks passed on, and Jim settled back into his seat. "This is queer business. It's a mixture of a Sioux warrior's song and a negro camp-meeting. *Here comes the boys!*" he shouted, oblivious of every other spectator, his eyes aflame with exultation, his big hands gripping his seat. With shrill shouting, two and two, a troop of horsemen galloped in, led by a middle-aged man who sat his horse in careless serenity. They were all mounted on tough, brown little ponies, not unlike the American bronco; but their saddles were low, without pommels, and had a sort of pad with ridges running along the thigh, which held each leg in place.

"They 're trailin' up the niggers," said Jim. "But wait a minute! Some of these chaps are bogus. They 're London runties. See their knees all hunched up! The feller in the lead is right, all right. See the straight leg? See the way he guides his horse? He knows his business. But about half the others are frauds; they can't ride."

As the men dismounted and went into camp, the mountaineer turned to look at Mary, his eyes glowing, his lips tremulous. "This puts me back on the Pecos. I 'm homesick right now. I 'd like to go down and shake hands with the cow-boss, and jump a horse and take a hand in the fight; he 's my kind." He took a grip on Mary's wrist. "Hold me, somebody, or I 'll jump that fence."

His heart was big with emotion, and his throat ached with the tension of it. Every time a horse made a fine leap or a rider swayed in his saddle with the free balancing swing of the natural horseman, he cried out like a boy:

"That 's right! You 're the real thing! You 've handled a horse before!"

Mary and Will shared very little in his excitement. How could they? To them it was amusing merely. To Jim it was elemental. It suggested the open spaces, the hardy life of cattle-men, the storm of stampeding herds, and long rides in the deep of night over the plain. It meant everything that London was not: all the adventures and joys of mountain life. It brought up all his days of toil and danger on the trail, with a hundred camps by rushing

mountain streams. It subtended the life he had lived and loved, and to which he was longing to return, and the force of it made Mary of little account and England a dreary prison-place. Had he been in love with the woman at his side and in bondage to London, the memories called up by these riders would have delivered him.

The grizzled old veteran of the Southern plains rode by with his trained horse, a superb animal, and as he whirled and saluted with bare head, proudly erect, Jim said: "There 's a man! Nothing the matter with him! Your dukes and earls are brindle broncos by the side of a thoroughbred like him. He 's fit to ride with Black Mose and General Miles."

The scene changed to a camp beside a big river. The immigrants were just hitching up to begin another day's run, when a detail of the black fellows came charging upon them. The cracking of guns arose, and the black men gave way. The immigrants hurriedly broke camp. The long line of oxen plunged boldly into the river, and, with nostrils spouting water, dragged the wagon safely through, and on through a rocky defile in the hills.

There was much significance in all this to Jim. "That 's bad business," he said, with a sigh. "That 's the way we did it in my country; only the men we tackled were red. I reckon these blacks are fighting for their country just the way the Sioux did."

The scene returned to the camp of the blacks. Uttering their splendid, ululating chant, they filed before their chief. "We go to fight the white man!" they shouted in unison. "He shall die! He comes to steal our lands — to kill our babies. He must be beaten back!" They knelt on the earth, imploring the help of the High Ones. Their prayers were like the moaning of November winds in the trees. Their naked bodies glistened like oiled ebony. On their heads were tufts of ostrich-plumes. Great bracelets of silver clasped their arms. Their decorated shields were of bull's hide, and their short spears, shaken in their swarthy right hands, menaced invisible multitudes. Pride and an epic resolution transfigured their dark uplifted faces. They stood as the representatives of those whom civilization conquers and destroys.

They passed away, and into the arena rode the English troops, careless, easy of seat,

weary, and watchful. The captain called a halt. The bustle of camping began. A shot was heard outside, and soon a rider appeared, dragging a gigantic negro at his horse's heels. The black was a scout, and was brought before the commander in order to be forced to tell where and in what number his people were camped. He refused to reply, and, with magnificent defiance of death, shouted: "I can die; I will not speak!"

The commander hesitated about torturing so fine a man, and the captive was led away. Alarums sounded without. The blacks rushed in, armed mainly with short spears, but a few carried rifles. Then the withering, blasting, roaring flame of the machine-guns was turned upon them, and they fell like mown grain. Again and again, with desperate, tragic courage, they rushed upon the British line, falling at the very mouth of the guns, the reports of which blended into a long, high-keyed, crackling, appalling roar. The auditors shuddered, as if they had not heretofore realized the horror which lay behind the quiet description of a machine-gun. The process of civilizing the earth was brought near.

"Is that what our men do?" asked Mary.

"That 's about as exact as they can represent it," replied Will. "The blacks were brave men; they fell inside our lines just that way."

"Poor fellows! They are worthy of a better fate. They are patriots in their way, I suppose."

"It 's a hopeless struggle, and the machine-guns went far to teach them the folly of trying to hold back the white man," remarked Will, as the black men, with wailing chants, gathered up their dead and marched away into the mountain defiles.

"The Apaches were too sharp to fight that way," said Jim. "They did n't give our men a chance to rake 'em with a Maxim."

But beneath all other feeling on Jim's part ran a rising tide of homesickness. The pictured peaks, the mimic waterfalls, the canvas trees, made him long with a mighty yearning for the realities of the far-off lands he called his own. As this emotion grew he forgot his companions and their words; he dreamed like an eagle on his perch, with senses filled with old-time sounds and scenes. It seemed that he had been away from home a full year. At the moment he could not have told what the season was.

He was singularly silent as they moved out with the crowd into the wide halls. His face had lost all its laughter-lines, and looked dark and stern. He paid no attention to the talk of his companions, and Mary, eager as she was to hear him speak, respected his mood. As they stood for a moment at the point where the great hall entered upon a sort of plaza wherein fountains were rushing, they heard the black men singing again. They were approaching. The noise of their coming echoed in the lofty halls as in a cavern; their deep, gusty voices, rolling on in deep-toned chant, formed a flood of sound each moment growing in majesty. Soon they came in view, with spears held high above their heads, their bangles, their gay shields, their snowy plumes, transforming the glistening ebony of their splendid bodies into some singular and beautiful metal. They came two abreast, with eyes of mystery, dreaming of their native hills, and their song arose in impulses and moved backward as waves arise and flee and break on dim shores.

As they passed a shudder swept over Jim. "Come!" he said imperiously, falling in behind the column; and Mary followed without a word.

The negroes entered a gate, and Jim, accompanied by Mary, found himself in a lofty amphitheater of painted hills — the hills of Lobengula's land. In the middle of the inclosing walls stood a kraal of conical mud teepees such as geographies had made familiar to Jim. On the painted hills other similar huts, wondrously real, were perched beside bright pools and foaming waterfalls. The land was deliciously green and smooth. Narrow paths ran from village to village. High mountains rose on all sides, and the whole glorious valley and its swarming life seemed serene and unmarked of war or greed. Jim lifted his shoulders and drew a deep breath. "This makes me think I 'm in the high country," he said.

The rest of the party joined them here, but he did not seem to see them. His face was lifted to the peaks.

As he stood there among the huts, night began to fall. Over small fires women crouched, preparing food. The warriors, smoking slowly, sat at their doors, talking in low voices. On every side women began to croon in half-voice, like happy, sleepy fowls, and the murmur of soft speech was broken

only by the sudden, soft laughter of young girls.

Jim, listening to this flood of soft sound, rose on it as on an invisible wave. The mine, London, Mary, became of no account. Home, the peaks, the clouds, the streams, reasserted full dominion over him. "To hell with London!" he said through his set teeth.

Mary laid a hand on his arm. "Come, Jim; we 'll be late to dinner!"

He turned his face upon her with a look which made her shiver with sudden pain. "I 'm done with England and you. I 'm going home. Good *night!*"

Without another word, he turned on his heel, and was lost in the crowd and the dusk.

Mary stood in a daze till Will laid his hand on her arm. "Come, sis, it 's time to go home. Where is Jim?"

"I don't know," she said, a sudden deep weariness in her voice.

It was nearly twelve o'clock when Jim reached the hotel, and he was tired. He had walked all the way from Earl's Court, and had lost his direction a dozen times in his abstraction. His heart was very bitter, and

he said: "They have been fooling with me. It was all right for a while, but it ends right here. Mary has had her fun with me, but I reckon she can't have any more." In this mood he was suspicious of everybody; every Englishman was his enemy.

The clerk handed him two notes. One was from Twombly, the other from Mary. Twombly was anxious.

Don't leave England without seeing me again. I think I may arrange to go back with you if you are still of a mind to have me. . . .

Mary's was abruptly passionate:

You must not leave me in this way! It is brutal! Come and see me again. What is wrong with you? What have I done? Give me a chance to set myself right with you. What did I do or say to make you leave us so abruptly? I 'm scribbling this here, with brother Will waiting. I can't put here what is in my heart to say. You *must* come for a good talk. You are a great, fresh, bitter wind to me. You 've done me much good: you 've restored my faith in men; you 've made me love the lonely mountains. Come and say good-by to me once more in a different spirit. Yours, MARY.

"I reckon the boat is waiting for me," he said grimly, at the end of the reading of this

letter. "I 've wasted five months on a fool project. I 'm due to hit the back trail to-morrow, and hit it hard while I 've got money enough to get home on."

XII

HOMEWARD IN THE BIG CANOE

JIM was awake at daylight the next morning, and set to work sullenly and swiftly to pack his trunk. At ten o'clock he was on his way to Liverpool. He was not sure that he could get a boat, but he had determined to leave London at all costs. Again green England — solemn, silent, and empty rural England — passed before his eyes; but this time he was too discouraged and too deeply moved to observe any detail.

He felt as if he had torn himself away from something very sweet and beautiful, and this feeling, combined with a realizing sense of his failure, took away the elation which would naturally have been his at starting out to return to the West. The accent of the people in his compartment annoyed him: three of them were plainly London "runties," who smoked tobacco which should have cut their

throats; and the fourth was a very silent, moon-faced individual, who opened his mouth to speak only when he thrust his head from the window and called to the guards: "Weer are us noo?" which he did at every station.

The fifth man was a Scotsman, and his burring tongue at last helped Jim to forget his bitter failure. The small cockneys were contending for the grandeur of Liverpool, while the Scotsman defended "Glassgie" as the only place in which to live. Their clamor was genuinely amusing. Jim took a hand at last, and argued that the only place to live was Wagon Wheel Gap.

It was raining in Liverpool, and the sunshine-lover was miserable. The fast boat did not go till the next day, and so all day he lounged about his hotel, silent and sullen. At the earliest moment next day he sought the steamer, and boarded her; and so weary was he of the city and the rain, and so homesick for the mountains, he felt very little hate of the boat. The ugly smells, now sickeningly familiar, were there, but the interior was newer and cleaner in all ways than on the other line. The miner spent nearly his last dollar in getting a berth where little motion would be felt,

and was quite overawed by the polished cabinets and the fittings of the room.

"Money 's no object here," he said to the purser. "If there 's a cubby-hole on this boat that 's easier for a seasick man than another, I want it. I 'm going into solitary confinement this time, if I don't lay up a cent. No more snoring drummers for me."

Again he stood looking down on the bustle of embarkation, but this time with a different feeling. "I 'm going home, no more to roam," kept ringing in his head, and he could not keep out the rest of the hymn, "No more to sin and sorrow." The thought of Mary came circling again and again in the swirl of his thought, and always with a sunny radiance and an odor of flowers, but always, too, with a subtle pain quite beyond his analysis. She was the one sweet and sunny place in all England to him.

He was leaning over the rail, watching the busy porters dimly, but thinking of Wyndhurst, when he caught sight of Twombly himself stalking majestically up the gang-plank, attended by a porter or two. He was dressed in a gray-and-yellow plaid suit, wore a cap with two "bills," as Jim would say, and car-

ried a brown-and-green shawl over his arm. Altogether he made a stalwart and striking figure.

When Jim met him at the top of the plank, Twombly grinned a little sheepishly and said, "I turn up, you see."

"I 'm mighty glad to see you. Are you going my way?"

"I am that, provided you are still of a mind to let me look at that property."

"That 's what it 's for; but how did you happen to hit on this boat?"

"Oh, Mary told me you had planned to board the fastest steamer on your return, and so I assumed you 'd take this line."

Twombly's manner toward the mountaineer had undergone great change. All stiffness had melted away, and his eyes were frank and manly. He no longer affected to look at Jim's hat-rim without seeing it. He entered upon the most unreserved good-comradeship at once, and Jim warmed toward him without intending to do so.

"I say, old chap," Twombly said suddenly, "you left Mary and the rest of your friends quite cut up by your sudden departure. Here is a letter intrusted to my keeping." He

handed Jim a letter addressed "James Matteson, Esq.," and the handwriting was Mary's. Jim took it and, with the face of a poker-player, put it into his pocket. Twombly searched deeper.

"And here are some letters handed to me by the clerk at your hotel. You left no forwarding address, you know."

Jim pocketed these without a word, and Twombly turned to his men. "Here, porter, get my luggage stowed into my room. The steward will show you."

When he turned Jim said: "Well, I 'll tell you how it was. I stood the climate about as long as I could, and then I had to hit the back trail or go plumb twisted. I 'm sorry they feel that way; but when I heard them blacks a-singin', and saw their camp-fires sparkle, I just nacherly had to pack my kit and *hy-ak kil-pi*, as the Siwash says. I 'm mighty sorry, but that 's the way I 'm made. The air 's too moist for my lungs. Your sun 's too pale. You 're not my kind, and I 'm not yours. That 's the how of it."

It was wonderful to see how thoroughly Twombly made himself at home on the ship. Wherever he walked porters attended him.

He secured the snuggest corner on deck for his chair, and the best seat at the table, and his state-room at the end of ten minutes looked like a place of permanent residence. The tone in which he spoke to the various stewards gave Jim a desire to kick him, and yet he liked him after all, and in spite of all.

After Twombly left him the miner continued to lean across the rail, absorbed in the noise and movement of the wharf. His long, strong body, grown gaunt during his days of worry, was graceful as that of a panther, and his profile, clear cut as the stamp on a coin, was serene and cold. He had lost much of his tan in the misty light of England, and his strong, lean hands were without sign of toil, and yet he was more subtly alien than ever. Girls passing looked upon him with admiration and in wonder of what manner of man he could be.

Though so serene of profile, Jim was inwardly a-quiver with impatience. He hoped each flock of excited passengers would be the last and that the signal for departure would sound. He did not care to read his letters till the boat was under way. He was done with Mary and all she represented; that he

had settled in the long hours of waiting in Liverpool. Whether she had been genuinely interested in him or not counted for little in the face of his clear realization that he, a man of the mountains, could not ask a woman of Mary's life and temperament to forsake her own and follow him. As for Bessie — well, that would bear thinking about. She was closer to his way of life. If the mine panned out —

The stream of incoming passengers slackened. The stewards went about warning all visitors to go ashore. All about him he saw people embracing one another in fervent farewells. Deep down in the monstrous bulk of the boat mysterious noises began, as though the creature were trying its own heart's action. The mountaineer straightened his big frame and lifted his face. The throb of engines began, and the rush of water told of the accelerating motion of the screws. At last the great vessel began to move. The miner was homeward bound. Lifting his broad-brimmed hat from his head, he stood for an instant bared; then he waved it and shouted, "Good-by!" Those who stood near him at the rail thought he called to some one on the wharf,

but he did not. His good-by was addressed to a small, fair woman in London, and included a relinquishment of all the complicated, worrisome social relations which she represented. He was returning to the simpler ways of living among the tall peaks of the Uncompahgre.

As the boat felt its way out of the harbor the mist lifted a little, and Jim caught a momentary glimpse of rows of low brick houses, red in the setting sun; then the fog rolled back, and he left England as he had found it, dark with clouds. With a feeling of exultation which crowded out all apprehension of sickness, he went below to read his letters.

He opened those from home first. One was from Mrs. Ramsdell, and contained a small picture of Bessie, which Jim looked at a long time before going on with the text. Mrs. Ramsdell said that they were all a little worried about him, and wished to see him returning soon. "We realize how hard it is to sell mining stock just now, and if it were not so dull here the doctor says he would ask you to come home and let things go. He is making great sacrifices to keep the men at work. I inclose a proof of some new pictures Bessie has just had taken. She did n't want

to have me send it, but I thought it might serve as a charm to keep off the power of some pretty English girl. We talk of you every day, and wonder when you will be able to start back."

Mary's letter was unexpectedly calm and kindly. He was not in a mood to understand the spirit in which it was written.

DEAR JIM: I hope Mr. Twombly will overtake you and hand you my letter. If he does I wish you would write me a word to say that you forgive me and that you are not angry at us. I know you think we were "having fun" with you; but we were not — at least, not after we really knew you. My memory of your visit will always be a great joy to me if only you 'll write and say that you do not wholly hate and despise me. I am horribly lonesome to-day. If only you could come in to lunch! Twombly thinks you have had news of a "strike" in your mine, and is suddenly very anxious to go in with you. This is for your private ear. He 's a good fellow, and I do hope you 'll take him into the venture. And, remember, I want a share also — a very little, but enough so that I can feel myself your partner.

It 's a suffocating thing to say good-by, Jim, when you know it *is* good-by. I know I shall never see you again; but you 've done me good, and every thought of you is wholesome and medicinal. I shall always think of you striding up the trail or smoking your pipe with old Ouray soaring behind you and the Grizzly Bear roaring in the cañon. There is a wild side to my nature, so that I can understand you; but you are not tame enough, not *insane* enough, to

understand me, and so we must always live at opposite poles of the world. When you die they 'll bury you on the mountain-side, where it is lonely of humankind and bright with sun, where the winds roar in the pines. When I die they 'll put me into ground rotten with thousands of others like me, and so even in death we 'll be set as far apart as the width of the world.

It was a comfort to me that you seemed to understand that man whose body lies buried in the sands of Africa. It is time to seal my letter. I could write all day to you, but I must say

Good-by and all happiness.

MARY.

Jim intently read and re-read this letter. There was something in it which moved him deeply, yet he could not analyze its power. He felt dimly the woman's love for her dead hero, but her attitude toward him was too complicated for his ways of thinking. In the end he fastened upon one dominant note, that of her loneliness, and set to work to answer and assuage that pain.

LITTLE PARTNER: Dont you worry a minute. Im not disgusted about anything special — Im not mad at you. I was homesick, thats the fact about it, and so I just naturally jumped the whole business. I like you all, but youre strangers after all. I dont quite savvy you. Youre not my people. I have no kick coming. You all treated me white — mighty white, considering

what an old lahoo I am anyway. Id no business to get into your country; its like a caribou wandering into the buffalo-grass country: he can live, but he aint happy. I was pretty lonesome myself yesterday waiting for the boat, but Im all right to-day, for Im going back. Im aiming for old Ouray, and if we dont blow out a cylinder-head or bust a knee Ill see the snow-peaks again in ten days. Im mighty sorry youre not going along, but I reckon youre right. Colorados a little too far from London and the air a little chilly for you. Yes, I reckon its good-by — except when I hear from you in a letter. Anyhow, Im much obliged for all you did for me. I wont forget it, not in a thousand years. You certainly made London a mighty sight cheerfuller for me by being in it. Yours respectfly,

Jim Matteson.

XIII

THE LITTLE GIRL IN ASPEN PARK

HAPPILY Jim's return voyage was less painful than his going. He was sick only two days; and yet he was never quite well, and never happy. The feeling of insecurity, of being suspended in the air, never quite left him. He ate, but took no pleasure in it. "I go through the motions; but it ain't eatin': it 's just coalin' up," he said.

He was much touched when at Queenstown he received a telegram signed "Mary and Will," wishing him "a good voyage and a pot of gold at the end of every rainbow"; but he did not attempt to reply to it. His eyes were on the western sky.

The weather was cold and cloudy, but the sea was smooth, and Jim took a hand in throwing rings at a peg, and also at shovelboard, which Twombly played from morning till night if he could induce any one to keep

him company. As for the gambling of the smoking-room, Jim kept out of that for lack of funds, much as he would have liked to throw a card. He had barely money enough to carry him to Chicago, and he did not care to be under obligations to the Englishman.

Twombly was willing to spend hours in discussing the mine, now that he was fairly off; but he was cautious of even half-promises, and Jim, being bored and irritated, refused to go over the ground a second time. "There 's the mine. You can have an option on a quarter-interest at fifty thousand by paying me five thousand dollars now, or take your chances after examining it. After we reach New York the whole business may take a flirt. The doc may or may not take your offer."

"I think I 'll wait till I see the mine."

"Suit yourself," Jim carelessly replied, though he knew that his trip was a dismal failure unless the Englishman came in. He did not know that the cautious Twombly had already in his pocket a favorable report of the mine from a friend in Denver. The boat entered a rolling sea, and Jim talked no more on any topic for three days.

As the gray-green vastness of the ocean slipped away day by day, his mind regained tone, and his words began to smack of the pines and the country rock again. The boat running smoothly enabled him to almost enjoy sailing, and the near prospect of landing excited him to the point of singing. He woke one night with a sudden thrill of joy. The boat was at anchor! Dressing hurriedly, he went on deck, expecting to see the lights of New York; but all was blackness and silence. The boat had stopped to repair an engine. He returned to his berth raging at the loss of time.

It was early on the last day of July when the outlook sighted the Statue of Liberty, and as the majestic, generous New York harbor opened out to receive his ship the mountaineer felt something hot surge round his heart, and his breath quickened. He took off his hat to New York. It was the gate to America, after all, and the greatest American city — less distinctive than Denver to him, but nevertheless American, and he was glad of any beauty or grandeur it might possess. Besides, he was weary of the sea and eager for the land.

"Right here I quit," he said. "Hereafter, when I feel like a sea-voyage, I 'll go to jail with a good ripe rain-barrel."

Twombly was astonished by what he saw. "I say, now, this is magnificent! There 's nothing finer anywhere. No wonder you are proud of New York." The glittering bay, with its crawling tugs, its lazily moving steamers, its loitering sailing-vessels, appealed to the Englishman with all the greater force by reason of its unexpected largeness. "Nature has been kind to New York, you know. Think of Paris with her small Seine, and London with her Thames. I wonder you 've not said more about this great city."

Jim looked uneasy. "Well, you see, we fellers in the West are a little leery of New York. She 's too much of a money power to suit us. She 's too selfish and overbearin', accordin' to our notion. She 's big and fine, sure thing; but she 's after the dollar, all right. Wants it a good dollar too, which makes the West extra hot under the collar just now."

"Ah, yes; I 've heard something about that: but I don't understand that silver controversy, y' know."

"Well, I can't say I do; but I kind o' 'sit in' with the boys out West, although I 'm a gold-miner and nacherly —"

A cannon-shot breaking from a near-by point of land interrupted him; and then, as the gay flag of the Republic went aloft on its high mast like a wind-blown rose, Jim's heart leaped, and a sudden singular contraction came into his throat. "There she rises — the prettiest flag afloat!" he said to the Englishman.

"I suppose every nation thinks the same of its own standard," said Twombly.

"Well, we don't think; we *know* it!" replied Jim, inclined to be insistent at the moment. "She 's pretty as the face of a girl."

As the big boat crept slowly up the narrowing harbor Twombly expressed a growing disappointment in the look of the city. "It 's immense!" he said. "But what a ragged sky-line! Not without impressiveness," he added thoughtfully. "It seems to me very American, though I know you consider it quite European. Those tall buildings, now — "

Jim was thinking of trains, and paid little attention to the big Englishman, who mopped

his neck and cried out against the increasing heat. To most of his questions concerning the city Jim could only acknowledge ignorance. At last he said:

"Now see here; I can tell you all about the mountains from Sierra Blanca to the Grinnell Glacier, but New York is new country to me. I camped here just one night, and was mighty glad to get away with my shirt on. I don't want any more city in mine. I think about three hours will do me this trip. I climb the first good train that gets out for the West."

To go from the boat to the city streets was like stepping from March into August. The morning was murky and still and damp, and the clamor of teamsters and fruit-sellers, the hot stenches of the alleys and the oppressive crowds, took away a large part of Jim's newborn love for the East.

"I reckon about one hour of this swamp will do me," he said to Twombly. "I 'm climbin' for high country these days. I 'd jump clear over Chicago if I could, and if it were n't for the folks in Aspen Park."

Twombly was much disturbed at this haste. "Oh, I say now, Matteson, this won't do. I

want to see a little of New York. Can't you stop over a couple of days?"

"Not a minute," Jim grimly replied. "I 'm on the home stretch now, and you could n't switch me off on a bear track."

Twombly, who did not care to be left behind, stood on the stern of the ferry-boat and sorrowfully looked back at the great row of mysterious buildings. "It looks uncommonly interesting," he said at last; "but I 'll have a look at it as I return."

"All right. Drive your stakes here if you want to; but my name is Colorado Jim, and I 'm going home."

He fairly dragged Twombly from the boat and on through the waiting-room to the ticket-window. Not till the tickets were purchased and their trunks checked did he permit himself a moment in which to think of other things.

"There, now," he said; "we have nothing to do but wait till the whistle blows."

"How soon does it blow?"

"At one, according to the man in the box."

Twombly looked at his watch. "It 's only half after ten. Suppose we take a turn about the city."

"Not for a half o' hog. I 'm keeping my eye on that hired man at the gate. When he opens it a half a link I get away. I 'm not curious about things. I 'm just in a hurry to see familiar grass."

Jim had another reason for hurry, and that was — Bessie. America and home began where she stood to welcome him; the other thousands of miles of town and country were merely part of his foreign travels. There was a restlessness in his brain, a gnawing hurry in his heart quite new to him. Whenever the words "Colorado" or "Denver" caught his eye on time-tables or posters he experienced a curious warming of the heart, and this emotion included the girl at Chicago. Mary was receding into the past; Bessie was drawing near. The sea, with all its glooms and unretraceable terrors, rolled between Mary and his thought; but the little girl in Aspen Park was almost within reach of his hand.

He had filled his pockets with folders of the Western railways, and amused himself and instructed Twombly by looking up the time-tables. Twombly was rather better instructed than most Englishmen in the vast distances of the United States, but he was

properly astonished to find Denver more than a thousand miles west of Chicago.

It was a long wait, but Jim had the patience of a man of the wilderness; and while Twombly wandered about the station and read the placards on the wall and chaffered the newsman, the mountaineer sat almost immovably in a seat not far from the door. He refused to go to lunch for fear of overstaying the time; and when the crier announced his train, he sprang to his feet, and remorselessly made for the door with Twombly's bag. The Englishman was just returning from the café, and was able to follow his guide closely.

Jim began to brag a little as they entered the train. "There, I call these cars; they 're no stage-coaches tacked end for end."

Twombly now took the attitude of critic. "I object to having the passengers all thrown together in this way. It 's too common — too promiscuous, y' know. I 'd rather have a separate compartment. You don't want to be exposed to the talk of the yokels in this way, really."

"Oh, you 're too blank highfalutin," said Jim. "You must n't take any of that out to Wagon Wheel. Your life would n't be

worth a leatherette if you tried to draw lines on the 'yokels' out there."

Twombly had a notion Jim was venting his high spirits on him, and did not reply; and as the train moved out soon, they had other things to think of.

"What an extraordinary country!" said Twombly once or twice each hour. "What State is this?"

"New Jersey, I reckon — one of the old States."

"Is Colorado at all like this?"

Jim smiled. "Well, not enough to hurt. Colorado is all kinds of a country except this. The most of it is a plumb mile nearer the sky than that hill, and the rest of it is three."

"Upon my word! How soon do we reach Chicago?"

"To-morrow afternoon, if nothing happens."

"Moving at this speed? It 's like going from Paris to Moscow. It *is* a big country — like Russia."

"Big ain't no name for it. Wait till you hit the slope on a Santa Fee 'Overland Flier.' You 'll think all outdoors is lined up and going East."

At six Jim led the way into the dining-car

with the air of a man on a familiar trail, and enjoyed the Englishman's amazement and pleasure. "This is what I call a dining-car. Your narrow lunch-counters and little 'corridor-cars' are fitten to make a sheep laugh."

Twombly endured all this brag with very good grace, and admitted that England was "behind America in some things."

As he sobered down a little, Jim ceased to be so disagreeably boastful, and admitted that the sleeping-cars were stuffy, and that their publicity might be distressing to ladies not accustomed to them. Twombly, on his part, conceded that no one could undertake these long distances without some such plan of accommodation.

In the morning the Englishman, being up early, had the whole smoking-room and all the wash-stands to himself, and was enthusiastic. "Really, now, this is unexpected good fortune. It is quite like a moving hotel. But the country seems unkempt," he added, looking out of the window.

Jim studied it meditatively. "Does look kind o' laid out for the wash, don't it?"

"What State is this?"

"I put this up for Ohio."

"Are we in the West now?"

"No; we don't hit the West till we begin to climb the slope a day and a night out of Chicago. We consider Chicago in the East, and New York next door to England."

The gathered grain standing in the shock, the portly ricks of hay, the busy teams, the little wooden towns, the roomy trains, the enormous engines, the absence of women and old men in the fields, the free-and-easy manner of the train-hands, all came in for remark from Twombly; and as he slowly talked of it all, the Colorado mountaineer began to feel a singular affection for Ohio and Indiana. His point of view had changed. From his high place in the mountains he had always looked back over these Eastern States as slow-going communities from which some good raw material for cow-boys occasionally came. Now he began to feel that America meant not merely the mountain country and the cities he knew, but all the cities and all the States. He rose on the surge of a patriotic emotion which lifted him above all sectional differences, all warring political ideals, to a conception of the dignity and promise of his country which made him feel a pride in every pretty girl and

every fine field he saw. He acknowledged a kinship with every youth toiling in the fields. In the glow of this emotion Mary became as insubstantial as a wreath of smoke. Correspondingly, from the moment he set foot on shore Bessie grew in importance to him. She was akin someway to all that he found sweet and wholesome in American life. As Mary passed out of his life the little girl in Aspen Park assumed immensest value. She stood again in the light of a possible wife. She was realizable, tangible.

In the long hours of the journey he permitted his mind to follow out the leadings of a shining, beckoning hand. If the mine yielded certain results and "she" (the girl) continued to be interested in him, he would build a house in Wagon Wheel for summer, and one in Sweet Water Springs for winter. He could come and go between the mine and home.

Home! His heart grew warm with the word. Since thirteen years of age he had never known a home; he had only camped. His boyhood had been one of toil and weariness, and the house in which his mother walked her ceaseless round of toil had been small and graceless. A bed in the garret at

home, a bunk in a cow-camp, a blanket and a "purp"-tent—these had made up for the most part his home comforts. He had never complained, and had not given much thought to anything better than board at a hotel till after meeting Bessie and Mrs. Ramsdell in their lovely cottage. Now his ambition was to own a house as good as Ramsdell's.

Meanwhile Twombly was full of talk, and his reflections on the country were a heavy strain on the mountaineer, who wished to spend his time in mapping out a course of action toward winning a timid young girl. Jim's replies became each time more distinctly curt, and at last he said, with considerable irritation:

"Just bottle up your questions till you strike the doc, and you 'll get a whole car-load of information. What he don't know would go into a hat. I never saw his beat. He used to lecture to me every night in the mountains on how the rocks was laid down, and how the rivers got into the cracks, and about the stars, and all that, till I was plumb locoed with it. Now, I was raised in Missouri and Kansas. I went to school till I was thirteen at the district school, and one winter

at the graded school at Sunflower when I was fourteen. Right there I quit. After that all I got I picked up along the trail. So don't you size me up as a professor or a leather-bound history; for if you do you 'll fall right down."

Thereafter Twombly spared him.

At last the low sand-dunes which mark the ancient site of Lake Michigan came into view, and other trains spinning round on parallel curves, under great columns of black smoke, told that Chicago was near. Jim was again tense with excitement, and pointing out a freight-car marked "Denver and Rio Grande," said, "We 're getting home."

"What a grimy country; but what a sky!" Twombly exclaimed at South Chicago. "It is like Algiers. Are these the prairies?" he asked, looking out over the marshes.

"Not yet," replied Jim. "You won't see the prairies till we strike out from Chicago to-morrow. These are only low flat lands."

Slowly the monstrous engine felt its way through the tangle of streets, under hovering clouds of vapor, and at last drew into the great shed, where it stood breathing heavily, like a horse too tired to do more than wait

with heaving sides and drooping head for the harness to be removed. Jim, who had been restlessly walking the aisles for a good half-hour, seized Twombly by the shoulder.

"Come on, colonel; here 's where we connect with the West."

Followed by Twombly and the porter, Jim hurried toward the big iron grating which shut his waiting friends from him. His keen eyes distinguished Bessie standing beside the doctor's shoulder. His heart warmed mightily toward them all, and he waved his big hat in greeting.

Leaving Mrs. Ramsdell and Bessie outside, the doctor charged through the crowd, and clapped his partner on the shoulder. "Hello, old man! How are you?"

"I 'm all right. How are you — and the folks?"

"Never better. Give me your valise."

The mountaineer was astonished to find his breath rather short as he faced the slim little girl outside, and for a few moments he was not quite able to command his lips. He thrust out his hand to her first of all, with a few words which she could not understand. She shook hands, but drew away a little. He

turned to Mrs. Ramsdell, who was smilingly studying him.

"You 've lost your good, brown complexion," she said. "You stayed so long we were afraid you were not coming back at all."

Jim's brain suddenly cleared. "Little old America is good enough for me," he said, and turned to Bessie as he spoke.

She looked older and less girlish to him, and her voice was cold as she said: "You must have had a wonderful time."

"I had the time of my life," he replied, in a tone which they could not understand. He turned to Twombly, who stood waiting. "Folks, this is the Mr. Twombly I wrote about. He 's our 'woodchuck.'"

Ramsdell shook hands. "I 'm glad to meet you, Mr. Twombly, even if you don't fill our pot."

"He 's the best I could do," said Jim.

Twombly gallantly tried to enter into the joke. "I can testify to the loyalty of your partner, Dr. Ramsdell," he said. "He is vastly persuasive."

Ramsdell then introduced the Englishman to the two ladies, and they all moved out into the waiting-room. Jim perceived a sub-

tle change in Bessie. She made no opportunities to speak to him as she had done before. She seemed rather to avoid him, and appeared taller and paler, and more self-restrained than when he had last seen her.

Ramsdell led the way to the side door, where his two-seated yellow runabout stood waiting. Jim's telegram had not mentioned Twombly, but he said:

"You 're to go right home with us."

Twombly protested: "I can see you did not expect me. I beg you will allow me to go to a hotel."

"By no means," said the doctor. "If we are to do business together we must move quickly, and to be on the spot to-night is essential."

Twombly consented, but more on account of the women, whom he admired very much, than on account of the mine.

Being mindful of his partner, the doctor took charge of matters at the carriage. "Mr. Twombly, you take a seat in the back with my wife; and, Jim, you 'll be obliged to sit beside Bessie. I know you hate it, but there 's no help for it. I 'll take a trolley car and beat you all home."

Bessie could not object to this, and as Mrs. Ramsdell carefully absorbed all of Twombly's attention, the two young people were left to themselves on the seat next the driver.

Bessie spoke first.

"I 'm so anxious to hear the story of your trip. I hope you are going to tell us all about it."

Her words were right, but her tone was merely polite.

"It was n't much," he replied. "The main thing is I collared the Earl."

Her face lighted up a little.

"Is he an earl?" she whispered, leaning toward him.

Jim was so taken up with the faint touch of her breath on his ear that he fairly stammered.

"Well — no; you see — I call him that for fun. He 's just a plain, every-day engineer. He 's interested in drain-pipes." He turned toward her as he said: "I was mighty glad to get your letters. It was sure a blue trip for me in London, and I was glad to hear from home."

"You did n't show it very much in your answers," she said, with a sudden change of

tone. There was a little silence. "Were you sick coming back?" she asked indifferently.

"Sick! Yes, of course I was sick. Had two meals — one off the coast of Ireland, the other when I sighted the Statue of Liberty. Oh, I 'm a prize sailor! I told doc before I went it would bust my constitution. It did, and I 'm going to lay claim to damages."

"You don't look so nice and brown as you did. London has spoiled you," she said, with a touch of audacity. "We hear you became a great society man over there."

"Who told you that?"

"Oh, we heard all about it. We expected you to come home wearing English plaids and a monocle."

He tingled a little under her smile. How pretty she was! He slyly looked her over, from her little ear down to the inordinately small foot which showed at the edge of her gown. She knew he was looking at her admiringly, but she remained very demure, with eyes turned away. How different from Mary — how sweet and comprehensible and untroubled she was!

Mrs. Ramsdell and Mr. Twombly were talking about Chicago. "Yes, it 's a dreadfully

inartistic place; but you must remember it is only about fifty years old, and is changing every day for the better."

Bessie joined in the conversation, much to Jim's dissatisfaction. He was not interested in Chicago: he only wanted to talk with Bessie; but the more he studied her, the less certain he felt of pleasing her by anything he might say. There was something in her manner which distinctly chilled him. Mrs. Ramsdell's eyes meanwhile were inquiring of Bessie: "What is the matter? Have you quarreled already?"

To this glance Bessie paid no heed, and Jim was forced to sit in silence while she told Twombly all about Aspen Park, into which they had then entered. It really was an attractive place, with its smooth green lawns and flower-beds, and wide porches looking upon the shaded streets. The wind was from the lake, and the air was cool and sweet.

Jim threw in a word: "Oh, it 's nice; but I 'd hate to live here all the time. About eight thousand feet above the sea suits me best."

"I like it here. I could n't live anywhere else," said Bessie, more emphatically than the case demanded.

Jim was perfectly sure that something had gone wrong, but did not care at the moment to ask for an explanation, especially as Bessie turned again to Twombly, who frankly admired her, and accepted her interest in him with unusual grace.

They found the doctor awaiting them, and Jim, springing out to assist Mrs. Ramsdell, gave Twombly the pleasure of handing Bessie out. In a few minutes they were all within, and Twombly had a chance to see what the home of his hostess was like. As a matter of fact, he was profoundly pleased. It did not occur to him that Jim was interested in dainty Miss Blake, and he saw no reason why he should not make a long stay in Chicago.

"By Jove! you 're ideally situated here — quite like a cottage in the country," he said as Ramsdell was taking him to his room.

"We think it 's rather nice," the doctor replied. "My practice is mainly in the city, and when I 'm here I am free of worry."

As soon as Twombly was taken care of, Ramsdell came into Jim's room and shut the door.

"Well, how is it, old man? Got 'im?"

"He 's on the line, but we may lose 'im. I done my best, doc; but they 're a little shy over there just now. These big mining failures in Africa have let everybody down hard. Twombly 's a fair man, and means business, if we 've got the metal; and we have. He is going out to investigate. Your letter about the Ella Grace just about upended me. I must get out there quick. I have a notion they 've opened up something good."

The doctor whistled softly. "Jim, I 'm going to save your life. I 'm arranging a junketing party, and Bessie is to go along."

Jim turned and held out his hand. "Shake, doc! that wipes out the grudge I 've had against ye for sending me on this blank sailing-trip."

"Pulled ye down a little, did n't it?"

Jim looked solemn. "Doc, I caved in; I sure did. It was the worst proposition I ever went up against. But it 's all right now. I forgive you. That is, I will if you help me win out with the little girl down-stairs. She seems a little shy this trip."

"Win out? Why, man, you 've got a cinch. She has n't done a thing but talk of you. She 's crazy to see 'Jim's mountains' —

that 's what she calls God's hills; you own 'em, root and branch, so far as she is concerned. She would n't let us see one of your letters to her. Hugged every one of 'em to her bosom and scooted for shelter. I knew you were putting the best of it into those bulky packages, but nothing availed. She was rock-bound silence on that side. The 'missus' is so pleased at the whole arrangement, she don't do a thing but pat herself on the head. But say, Jim, this Englishman likes Bessie, too. He had eyes like a potato-bug when he looked at her."

"I 'll cut him off at the pockets if he interferes," replied Jim, grimly.

The doctor threw out a warning hand. "No; not till we empty the pockets, Jim. Seriously, I don't know whether we want his money or not. I kept a small crew pickin' away, and we may strike it yet. How much of a contract have you made with him?"

"No contract at all. I tried to get him to make a payment to me on board the boat; but he was shy, and kept on the other side of the fence."

"I 'm glad of it. Things are coming our way out there, if I 'm any judge o' whisky.

We 'll keep Twombly interested; but I 'm not a bit anxious since Cuyler wrote."

Twombly came down to dinner quite unwrinkled, and set himself to the enjoyment of Mrs. Ramsdell's excellent but very simple dinner. Jim carried the calm countenance of a Sioux chief, but had a watchful eye upon all that passed between the Englishman and Miss Bessie Blake.

Ramsdell began at once to plan the trip. "We 'll take the 'Overland Flier' on the Santa Fé, and change to the Rio Grande at Pueblo."

Bessie fairly shouted: "Oh, oh, oh! Won't that be jolly! When do we start?"

"We!" said Ramsdell, teasingly. "Who said you were going?"

"You did. Did n't he, auntie?"

Ramsdell reconsidered. "Well, perhaps I did. Have a little more chicken, Mr. Twombly."

Bessie's eyes were shining now. In her excitement she forgot to be reserved with Jim. "I 've longed to see the mountains all my life, and to go this way is beyond everything. I 'll need a mountain-dress, won't I? What do girls wear out there, Mr. Matteson?"

Jim was taken by surprise. "Well, now

you 've got me cornered. Seems like they wear some kind of dark outfit generally. I don't think any of 'em dress the way you do. I reckon *anything* you wear will be all right."

"There 's loyalty, Bessie," said Mrs. Ramsdell.

The doctor interposed: "Jim would n't know whether a girl wore a Paisley shawl or a kimono."

"Did you stop over in New York?" asked Mrs. Ramsdell.

"No; I hustled right through. I was afraid there would n't be another train out."

Bessie gave her attention thereafter to Twombly, who talked exceedingly well in answer to the girl's eager questions, and soon held the attention of Mrs. Ramsdell also.

As they rose from the table Bessie turned to Jim. "Can you play tennis?"

"I reckon I can if you 'll show me. I never saw a game yet I could n't make a showing at if I was pushed into it."

"Oh, what fun! We 'll back you, Mr. Cow-boy. Of course you play, Mr. Twombly."

Her tone as she said "of course" nettled Jim a little, but he went with Ramsdell to try on his tennis-trousers, resolute as ever.

"We like to have early dinner and a game afterward," Mrs. Ramsdell explained. "Our game, like our dinner, is very light, and no harm results."

Jim was fairly well fitted out with Ramsdell's trousers and shoes, and as he came into the doctor's room he said: "If anybody in March had told me that in August I 'd be playing tennis with the purtiest girl in Chicago, I 'd 'a' said, 'Where 's your keeper?'"

"The mutations in human affairs ofttimes transcend the phantasmagoric," mused the doctor.

Jim eyed him suspiciously. "Don't start in having fun with me, pardner. My in'ards are all hair-springs to-day." He looked at himself in the glass. "Great Jupiter! If the boys should see me in this rig they 'd toss me in a blanket. Don't tell on me, for the Lord's sake."

As he stepped forth on the porch the women exclaimed in admiration of his handsome figure. His shamefaced look was deliciously boyish.

"If you play as well as you look, Jim," called Ramsdell, "you 'll sweep the field."

Bessie chose Twombly for a partner, and Jim understood that she was carrying out a

consistent scheme in ignoring him; but he determined that she should not have a chance to laugh at him. He gave his entire attention to the game. He missed the ball, he batted it through the netting, he made a hundred faults; but he was admirable by reason of the grace and swiftness of his play.

"If I could only lay out some muscle in the durn thing," he said to Mrs. Ramsdell.

She smiled encouragingly. "You do beautifully, Jim."

"It gravels me to see that slab-sided Englishman play so well," he said in a low voice. "If I had a week's practice I 'd make him hunt a hole. For a woman's game, there 's a whole lot of exercise about tennis," he said to Bessie, over the net.

She laughed mockingly. "You 're improving very fast. Never saw any one pick the game up quicker."

"That elects me to Congress," he replied. "But I guess I 'll pull out and let the doc take my hand."

Ramsdell refused, and so Bessie and Twombly played a game or two while the others looked on. Jim, under pretense of "learning all the wrinkles," kept near Bessie; and as the

girl laughed at one of Jim's quaint remarks, Ramsdell said to his wife:

"For a plain, every-day miner, Jim seems to be making love with a certain deftness and despatch."

"It is wonderful. But did you ever see anything like the coquetry of that girl? She 's playing havoc with him."

"I seem to remember some scenes in which you and I played much the same parts, my dear," the doctor musingly replied. "I was a green medical student,—had n't half the dignity and reserve of Jim,—and you befooled me."

"Now, Willard, that is not true. You know I was loyal to you from the very start. I never even *looked* at any one else."

"I could cite cases—"

"Well, if I did, it was for your good. You were insufferably egotistical."

"I did n't see your action in that benevolent aspect then."

"You do now."

"I did n't say so."

Bessie and Twombly played on till darkness fell; but Jim gave up his position on the court and took a seat on the piazza with the doctor,

who tried to get him to talk; but for some reason he was not in a mood for conversation. His replies were curt and sometimes bluntly evasive, and the doctor gave him up and sauntered out to the stable.

When Twombly brought in the rackets, Mrs. Ramsdell took possession of him and led him away to look at some flowers along the walk, leaving Bessie and Jim sitting on the porch together. Bessie was wonderfully self-possessed, and developed a keen interest in Wagon Wheel Gap, and asked a great many questions, some of them apparently irrelevant.

"Are there no girls out there?"

"Oh, yes, a few. I never got acquainted with any except the waiters in the hotels and restaurants. They 're generally mighty plain samples. Once in a while some 'one-lunger' from the East comes out and shows us another kind."

"What is a 'one-lunger'?"

"Feller with one lung — consumptive out for his health."

"Oh, what a funny name! Do girls like that go out there?"

"Sometimes. There was one girl I used to see riding around in a carriage. She was

something your style, only paler and kind o' sad-lookin'. She stayed at the same hotel I got my meals at. I was mighty sorry for her. Everybody round the ranch took an interest in her. But they brought her there too late. Mountain air will just about mend a hinge on a door, but it won't cure a girl without any lungs at all."

"Poor girl!" Something in Jim's tone sobered Bessie. "Is Wagon Wheel a real city or just a village?"

"Well, it 's quite a camp now — a big town scattered round over the valley; and there 's lots o' people in it that I don't know. A feller lopin' around over the hills chasin' up rocks and runnin' 'overland tunnels' don't get to know many people. When we 're in town we eat at hash-houses, where you have to lay a brick on your pie or the flies 'll get it first."

"Oh, how horrible!" The girl shuddered at the picture.

"It sure makes a man think o' home. I 'm tired of it, and if the Earl goes into our mine, I 'm goin' to change my pie-joint. I 'm goin' to have a home of my own." He checked himself, and in the pause which followed the

girl gazed straight ahead as if seeing something far off. Jim's voice changed. "But we must n't count chickens before they 're out o' the shells. They may not be a thing in it, and I may have to climb another big ridge before I build that house."

Twombly, escaping from Mrs. Ramsdell, sauntered back, and addressed his conversation to Bessie with the frankest intent to monopolize her. He quite outdid himself under the inspiration of Bessie's absorbed interest. Jim rose abruptly and went in the house, deeply chagrined at her easy forgetfulness of him.

"I reckon I 've taken a whole lot of trouble to trail up the wrong girl," he said to himself. "'Pears like I can't do better than just pull out for the Grizzly Bear trail and crawl into my hole."

The doctor, coming in, made matters worse by saying: "Jim, that Englishman has queered your plans; to all intents and purposes, Bessie is hisn."

"You need n't rub it in on me," replied Jim.

Ramsdell changed his tone. "Oh, come now, don't take it too seriously. She may be

just playing Twombly to make you come to time."

"I guess I 'll turn in," said Jim. "I have n't had much sleep for two nights."

"Very well. We 'll have plenty of time to-morrow to skin our woodchuck."

To Mrs. Ramsdell the doctor said: "That little flirt of a girl has given Jim a powerful jolt, and he 's too unsophisticated to conceal it."

"Where is he?"

"Retired to his lair surly as a bear with a sore ear. What do you suppose the little witch means by it?"

"I think her pride was hurt by those stories about Jim and the London society woman."

"By George, you are right! I 'd forgotten all about that. I wonder if there was any truth in the yarn. I 'll ask Jim in the morning."

"It would be safer to wait," Mrs. Ramsdell replied; "perhaps he 'll allude to it himself."

As he lay in his bed, Jim could hear Bessie singing with Twombly, and it seemed to him he was shut out from all the good things of earth. Something had changed her attitude toward him; something had angered her. What was it? Had she heard of Mary?

He sprang up and dug the packet of letters

out of his valise, and went over them one by one with great care. The first few seemed to justify his former reading of her intent, but in the later ones he came upon the expression of the same cool sweetness which was in her greetings.

In one of Mrs. Ramsdell's letters, which he could not have carefully read, he found a line which instructed him. "We are hearing strange things of you," she had written. "A friend sent us a letter which appeared in the 'Denver Record.' It is evident that you are enjoying yourself *very much* in London."

"I see it," he said to himself. "That infernal Siwash McAllister has handed out a few nice ones to Ed Brainard about Mary and me. I 'd like to break him in two." He did not consider himself to blame in the matter. All his intercourse with Mary was over and gone, and, manlike, he thought it unimportant to any one else, anyway.

Knowing what the matter was, and curing the matter, were two different things to Jim. It was not easy for him to explain the simplest of his feelings to a woman, and to justify himself to Bessie in his relations to Mary was quite beyond him. "There is only one thing

to do," he concluded grimly, "and that 's to hit the Sunset trail like a hurricane, and leave the whole durn woman business behind." These complications and doubts and allurements, these hair-hung, triple-jointed mental problems, were enough to wear a man's patience to a fringe. What was the use trying to explain, anyhow?

With a smothered growl of resentment, he turned his face to the wall and went to sleep.

He was a different man when he came down to the table next morning. His brows were set in straight lines, and his eyes were keen and stern. He responded very curtly to the doctor's greetings, and not even Mrs. Ramsdell's cordial smile could soften him. The doctor was sleepy and dull, and Jim understood from this that Twombly had improved his opportunities the night before, and had kept them all up late.

Bessie did not appear at all, and Jim was glad of that, for the doctor opened up forbidden topics at once.

"By the way, Jim, what 's all this talk concerning you and a London society woman? What about it?"

"What society woman?" he asked, to gain time.

"Oh, we know all about it. The Wagon Wheel papers were full of it. You made a bigger hit with the nobs than Buffalo Bill, Mr. Twombly says."

Twombly interposed: "Oh, come now! I 'm not going that far."

The doctor insisted: "Well, anyhow, we want an account of those rides in the park."

They all looked as if expecting Jim to joke. He did not; he did not even smile as he slowly answered:

"That is my business, doc, and I 'd advise any man who 's been havin' fun with me to climb a tree when I come by."

The doctor was astonished, but he knew his hunting partner too well not to respect that tone in his voice. He hastened to apologize.

"I beg your pardon, old man; I did n't know you took it seriously. It 's all right; shoot me on sight if I say another word. Now, when can we get off for the mine?" he asked, to change the subject.

"I leave this afternoon," Jim replied; "you can come on when you 're ready."

"Are n't you going to wait and go with the party?" asked Mrs. Ramsdell.

"No; I reckon I 'm a little too swift. I 've had enough of the low country. I 'm goin' to pull my freight before I catch the swamp-fever," he replied. "I 'm a-goin' to jump high, and hit only the high spots in the scenery. If there was a train runnin' a mile a minute, I 'd take it."

"By Jove! I 'll go with you," said Twombly. "I 'll have me box repacked in half an hour — never fear."

"I reckon you 'd better not," Jim coldly replied. "You 'll fare better if you come along with the women. Right here I turn you over to the doc. I don't want to be responsible for you from this on."

Mrs. Ramsdell caught his glance, and said very gently: "I 'm sorry you won't wait, Jim. I had counted on having you show us the great peaks — and so had Bessie. I know she 'll be very much disappointed if she does n't enter the mountains with you."

The trailer felt the sincere regret in the voice of his hostess, but did not weaken. "I reckon she 'll pull through without me," he said, and rose from the table abruptly. "I 've

done my *duty*, doc; I 've had my shout, and now I return to my goats."

The doctor excused himself to Twombly. "Mrs. Ramsdell will bring you down-town later." He said nothing more to his partner till they were fairly seated in the train, and when he did begin his voice was no longer jocular. He spoke firmly, too, without hesitation.

"Jim, what did they do to you over there? You 're not the same man at all. You don't joke; you 're touchy as a locoed horse. I never saw such a change. Old man, if I thought I 'd lost your friendship through this English trip, I 'd feel like sinking the whole blank mine to the gates of hell. Come, now, this is getting serious; we 've cinched too many pack-mules together not to get to the bottom of a thing like this without bad blood. What 's wrong? You must n't bristle up at me."

Jim sat in silence for a moment, then curtly replied: "I 'm all right. I brought our man out, did n't I? You 've no call to roar about that, I reckon."

"Yes. But see here, old man; I 've had my joke about you and the girls, but I 'm in

dead earnest about Bessie. You see, the girl had heard me sing your praises till she was fairly crazy to see you, and when you came on you captured her; we all saw that. After you went to England she did nothing but talk about you, and she wrote regularly to you until that article came out in the Denver papers. It was a nasty letter. It was intended to do you good, but it hurt you. It said you 'd been taken up by a society woman over there, and that you were seen everywhere with her. We all thought she was making a fool of you, and naturally Bessie—"

"It was that jackass McAllister. Ed Brainard should have had sense enough not to print his letter."

"All the papers copied it with glee. Well, that sobered Bessie down. Of course Mrs. Ramsdell and I made light of it; but your letters along about that time did n't help matters a little bit. Now, Mrs. Ramsdell had set her heart on making a match between you and Bessie; but that letter queered the whole proposition for the time being. How much truth was in it?"

"You want a straight-goods answer?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't know myself."

Ramsdell turned sharply. "What am I to understand by that?"

"I don't know that, either. I met her at Dr. Robertson's. I liked her, and she liked me. She was a mighty bright girl,— about the brightest I ever saw,— and she took a whole lot of interest in my affairs. I would n't 'a' had Twombly only for her. The whole thing seems like a dream to me now. I reckon she started in to make game of me,"— he paused with instinctive delicacy,— "but we got to be good friends. We sure went the rounds together, and we had a good time. But she was a fine woman,— don't make any mistake,— and — I — I thought one while I needed her, and I tried to bring her along. Now, that 's the God's truth. But she put the kibosh on that, and so I came home without her." He ended, looking out of the window: "I 'm glad I did now; but, all the same, we had some mighty fine rides together."

The doctor sat in silence. Jim's tone made the entanglement much more serious than he had supposed. He wished Mrs. Ramsdell were there to hear the cadences in the trailer's

voice. "Well, Jim, all I can say is, she must have been a high-class specimen."

Jim was touched. "She was, doc; she was sure enough all silk, and I 'd 'a' brought her if I could; but — it 's all over now. As I say, it 's like a dream, and I reckon the sooner I forget it the better. It was a mighty queer formation to put me into over there; they sure had me guessin' most of the time: but they never knew it. I trumped every big card they led, and I won out. Now I reckon I 'm done with women and tea for a few days. I 'm climbin' back to timber-line, and when I git there, I 'll stay there. No more big canoes and nervous women for me; I want to get my shoulder ag'in' a rock for a while and find out where I 'm at."

The doctor smiled again. "I guess you 'll come out all right. Every man has a weak side. Well, you 're right about getting out for the mine. Go ahead and see if you can ferret out the mystery of the Ella Grace. We 'll come sailing along about a week later."

"All right. When I get old Ouray propped ag'in' the moon, and hear the Grizzly Bear singin' below, I reckon I can just about feel the grass grow. They won't fool me twice."

That night at dinner Ramsdell handed to Twombly the slip which contained McAllister's letter about Jim. After he had read it, Twombly looked up to say:

"Very clever, that — and it 's nearly true, too."

"I wondered about that."

"Of course Mary is n't the no end of swell that this reporter makes out. She 's a very clever girl, y' know, and all that — and goes in for the literary and artistic. And she *is* degenerate, as this fellow says; but, really, she is n't half so bad as he paints her. She 's very nice. Her boldness is all talk, y' know — oh, quite so! Yes; Jim was no end successful wherever he went, but he would n't let anybody use him. I fancy Mary was obliged to humor him."

"Did he ride in the park — the way the letter says?" asked Bessie.

"Oh, quite so. Indeed, they were most conspicuous there. Mary is an excellent horsewoman, and took peculiar pleasure in Jim's cow-boy ways. The camping trip which this fellow just hints at was really great fun. I had a share in that myself. But it was quite innocent. Mrs. Robertson chaperoned it."

He told of Jim's assumption of the airs of the guide with great glee, and described minutely the two days' outing. "It was jolly sport. Nothing would have pleased Mary better than to be out a week in a tent, eating Jim's cooking; but Mrs. Robertson was seized with a panic for fear it would rain, or of burglars, I don't recall which, and that ended it all. Mary went black as a thundercloud,— you fancy her feelings,— and we all filed away back to Wyndhurst; and Jim bolted for the city next day, disgusted with the lot of us."

Bessie did not find this at all amusing. "Were there only two women in the party?"

"That 's all; Mary and Mrs. Robertson."

"You say Miss Brien has written a book? What kind of a book?" asked Ramsdell.

"Well, really, now, I could n't say. I don't read novels, on principle. But Mrs. Robertson alluded to it occasionally as a dreadful example of what a really fine girl is willing to put into print."

The doctor smiled at his wife. "I reckon I can guess at the character of it. We 've had a book or two of that sort crop out here in Chicago."

"I had a notion that Mary was using Jim as material; but he is by no means easy leading. I fancy she got a different sort of story out of him than she had planned for. Anyhow, he left her without a word of farewell; and it was only by a lucky shot that I hit upon him at the boat. He seemed rather overjoyed to be out of it."

Bessie was very grave. "I think it was very low and deceitful of her to use Jim in that way."

Not till the women were alone did Bessie permit her aunt to see how deeply she was hurt by Jim's sudden departure. She put her head against Mrs. Ramsdell's bosom and cried a little.

Mrs. Ramsdell was inclined to be severe. "It was your own fault," she said, with more impatience than she had ever shown before. "I never knew a woman to enact that stupid old comedy of flirting to make her lover jealous without getting hurt. It 's silly and it 's dangerous. You should have waited for him to explain — I don't think Mr. Twombly has given us the whole truth. I mean to suspend judgment till Jim tells me all about it himself. He 'll surely confide in the doctor. There is

nothing for you to do but go with us and be nice to him, and see what happens. If you really care, and he cares, things will come out right, after all."

After one has spilled one's porridge, advice as to what might have prevented it is never welcome, and Bessie resented her aunt's eminently sensible words. The mountaineer had appealed to her imagination even in the vague form given him by the doctor's words: he stood for something big and daring and elemental; and his actual presence had not disappointed her. His powerful and graceful figure, his fine profile, and his humorous brown eyes developed love out of interest. She had made of him an epic figure, and her loyalty to him during the months of his absence made his interest in another woman seem like a breach of faith. She was hurt and deeply resentful of his easy shift of purpose; but a night's sleep enabled her to recover her native serenity. She looked forward to seeing him again. Perhaps — !

Meanwhile she found Mr. Twombly's attentions grateful and diverting.

XIV

THE SNOWY PEAKS

WHEN Jim left Chicago the smoke hung low over the roofs of the city, and the engines crept about in the darkness like timid kine. The Colorado express was two hours getting outside the city limits, but when he woke the mountaineer was made glad by the vivid prairie sunshine. The train was rushing through rich pastures and between the waving green blades of soldierly corn. The shaven stubble of garnered wheat-fields was like mottled velvet to the eye. It was all good to see, but Jim was impatient for the mountains. The next day in Kansas was a long day, but signs of home thickened hour by hour.

When he reached First View, Jim rushed out on the platform to see if the Spanish Peaks were in sight, and when he located their faint outlines in the sky, he took off his hat to them and yelled like a Comanche:

"Whoo-whoop! there she rises!" and turning, waved his hand in good-by to the low country.

As he neared the majestic wall, over whose tops the sun was setting, every vestige of his gloom and bitterness swept away. The mountain-peaks clarified his brain as the wind from the pass blew the miasma of the low country from his garments. His eyes resumed their quizzical humor and his words regained the full flavor of the West. He spent an hour on the platform with two very plain old women from Massachusetts, explaining the habits of wolves and prairie-dogs, and pointing out the peaks which thickened along the horizon-line; and in the smoking-room he became the center of interest. When alone he sang with a yowl like a mountain-lion.

At Silver City he was forced to wait six hours for the narrow-gage train; but he did not mind that, for he was again in the land of the Mexican saddle, the cow-boy, and the miner. He walked the streets, glad of every sign of home. The windows filled with sombreros, spurs, and pack-saddles; the ponies standing with drooping heads and slanting, tired hips, their reins dangling; the crowds of young men in and about the saloons; the

boxes of ore in real-estate windows — all these gave him serene joy. They were all proof that he was not dreaming — that he was in very truth homeward bound.

When he found himself in the little sleeping-car, and fairly doubled into his berth, he gave a sigh of keen pleasure and said:

"When I look out again I 'll be on the western slope of the Christo range."

Several times during the night he woke to feel the train moving slowly on a sharp curve, the two little engines panting like tired dogs, and said to himself: "We 're on the Elk Horn grade," or, "This must be the approach to the tunnel."

The air grew keener, crisper each moment, and raising the curtain of his berth, he peered out at the giant domes looming somberly against the cloudless sky blazing with low-hung stars. London was a smudge of yellow mist, New York a miasmatic swamp, and Chicago a storm of dangerous traffic, as he looked backward and downward upon them in imagination.

"It 's a wonder I ever got back alive," he said, thinking of the multiple dangers of his journey. "But here I am, and here I stay."

From Junction City (which lay squat on the hot sand of the level valley) he could see the clouds circling over his mountains, and his heart yearned for the rain-wet trail which ran to his cabin and to the mine. It was hot noonday, and the gleam of the snow in the gulches lured him with such power he could scarcely endure the wait for dinner. The water was singing below his door, the squirrels were barking, the camp birds and jays were disputing, and down below the purple valleys wound away into silence.

At last he found himself on the "spur" and driving straight toward the cloudy mountain-land whose ragged peaks rose nearly fifteen thousand feet above the sea. In the narrow-gage car were men he knew, and they all seemed glad to see him.

"How did you come out on your London trip, Jim?" one man asked in friendly directness.

"All right, I reckon. I got my man."

"Don't sell too cheap," said his friend, significantly.

"What you mean by that?"

"Well, I 'll tell you. There 's something going on in the Ella Grace. You know

that stock was hard to sell at ten when you left."

"Yes; I did n't want it at that."

"Well, it 's fifty-five now."

"Whew!" whistled Jim. "What 's up?"

"Somebody 's quietly buying in the stock, I *hear*. I don't know anything about it. Ask Sam Cuyler. I hear that they 've tapped the vein that is in the Concordia. If they have — I say if they have —"

"Any clue to the buyer?"

"Well, they say that Cuyler is doing the buying himself through agents. Mind you, that is only what I hear. Meanwhile the ore makes no showing."

Jim mused. "I see his game. He wants to control the stock before he makes any showing. I 'm much obliged, Tom. I reckon I got home about the right time."

"You 're in line on that vein all right. It cuts right through the hill."

"That 's been my calculation all along."

Jim was doubly anxious now to reach home. It was well toward sunset when the laboring engines climbed into the little flat where the Grizzly Bear roared over its shallows, and stopped in the midst of Wagon Wheel to rest.

The mighty walls, soaring six thousand feet above the town, were lighted with the golden glow of the sun, which had already left the top of the secondary peaks. The broad fields of snow were rosy pink; the grassy slopes glowed with opalescent lights; and one or two great, solitary white clouds seemed to stand on edge behind Ouray, waiting in the deep-blue sky. Jim lifted his eyes and took a good look at the peaks he loved, and then struck out up the street with long strides. He had finished sauntering; he was going to work.

Every man he met had a word of jocular greeting.

"Hello, Jim! Glad to see you back."

"Glad to be back."

"Hello, Jim! How 'd you like the East?" asked another.

"No more low country for me."

A third was facetious: "Hello, Jim! Well, by the Lord! Never expected to see you again, after that article in the 'Record.' I said, 'That ends it! Jim 's sold his mine, and got hooked by a girl.'"

Jim walked on without reply.

"Good evening, Jim," said the clerk in the

post-office window. "How 's your health?" and she reached her hand to him.

He took it heartily. "I 'm about as usual, I reckon; how are you?"

"Oh, so 's 't I sit in my box. Say, they 's a whole bunch of mail for you — one English letter, sealing-wax, monogram, and all that! When are we to see that 'mash' you made over there?"

"About the day before kingdom come, I reckon," said Jim, as he took the letters. "I was selling a mine. When I hooked my fish, I come home. Girls was a side issue with me".

"It did n't look so when you was a-ridin' around the parks with Lady Blank-Blank. Oh, we know all about it. The 'Hub' reprinted the article, and we girls all cut it out and pinned it on the wall. You 'll have to give a champagne dinner to square yourself with us; now that goes."

"Good night!" said Jim, with a grin.

"We 'll ha'nt you if you don't," she called after him.

He stuffed the letters into the pocket of his rough coat, and handed his valise in at the hotel. "Here, you keep this for me; I 'm goin' up to the mine."

"Better have supper first," said the clerk.

"No; could n't eat now. Good night."

As he climbed his heart grew gay. On the yellow roads the groaning brakes of great ore-wagons could be heard. Droves of burros pattered along, each with his two sacks of ore, his head held low, his ears flapping. The imperious or jovial calls of the drivers echoed from cliff to cliff, shaking the miner's heart with wordless joy.

The air was marvelously fresh and soft and clear. The cañon water called huskily from its deep, cold shadow, but on the opposite peak the setting sun still lay warm and red. High in the blue air, close to a cloud, a couple of eagles were at play. Jim was coming to his own. London was at the under side of the world; Chicago was lost in the shadows of the low country.

Darkness came on swiftly, and the mountain world grew ever more mysterious and alluring. The voice of the stream grew mightier and mightier, till it seemed to fill the cañon as the voice of a lion resounds in a cavern, imperious, insistent, unremitting. As the last rays of the sun rested on the highest peaks, they blazed with light as though on

fire from within, and became twin brothers of the mighty clouds that hung motionless above them.

Jim noticed with disgust that his legs ached and his breath came with an effort. "The low country has taken the tuck out o' me," he said. "Good thing I 'm back."

In the old days he could walk that ever-mounting trail in two hours, with a pack on his back; now he was breathing hard with nothing but his coat to carry, and was falling behind his schedule, besides. Though his limbs grew weary, his senses were alert. He heard every insect, every bird, and the odors of the plants and flowers came to his nostrils with infinite suggestion. He had never before been absent from the wild things of earth for a single day, and his eyes and ears were avid of the good, familiar sights and sounds. As he hurried on, he passed mine after mine. He knew every light: that was the Commodore, that was the North Star, and that was the Ella Grace. His mine was on the other side of the Kicking Horse, which entered the Grizzly Bear at right angles just below timber-line.

There was no light as he came in sight of

the cabin; Bill had gone to bed. A coyote leaped away from the door, where he had been sniffing for bones, and scampered up the trail.

Jim hammered on the door. "Hello, the house! Hello! Open up! I want to stay all night!"

Listening, he smiled to hear a muttered oath of surprise. The creak of boards followed, as the man within rolled from his bunk and came across the floor. "Is that you, Jim?"

Jim resumed his tattoo on the door.

"You bet your life! Open up! I'm hungry enough to eat nails."

"Wait a minute till I strike a glim."

When the feeble glow of a candle fell upon the miner, it disclosed a tall, gaunt, bearded, and very swarthy man of fifty. He shook hands impassively. "Glad to see ye. Why did n't ye tell us you was comin'?"

Jim went over to a table which consisted of a flat box nailed against the logs of the cabin.

"Did n't know when I 'd get here. Did you leave anything to eat?"

"Durn little. I reckon they 's a hunk o'

beef and some b'iled potatoes. They 's about a spoonful o' prunes in that can, and some coffee. Help yourself."

"I 'm in luck."

"You shore be. Andy went to town at noon, and hain't got back. I reckon he won't *get* back. Simonson come by, and said he see him drunk as a b'iled owl, a-settin' out back o' the blacksmith shop. How are ye, anyway, boy?"

"I 'm all right. Go to bed," replied Jim, and the old man obeyed with a yawn. They understood each other too well to require any fancy phrases.

As he chewed on a hunk of tough beef and drank his cold coffee, Jim thought of Mary and Wyndhurst and its exquisite table, with its flowers, its silver and crystal service, and its dainty food, and the life it subtended seemed like something he had read about in youth.

He took out his letters and laid them out before him. One was from Mary, and it seemed as alien there on the rough pine table as her glove would have been. It gave him a curious pang of pain to open that delicate little square envelop. Its faint perfume brought vividly to his mind her dress, the gleam of

her white shoulders, her hair, her rose-tinted face. She was not easy to forget. It seemed so long since he had seen her, he did not perceive that the letter must have been written immediately after he left for Liverpool. The letter ran:

Dear Old Trailer: I hope this will find you in your aerie on the cliff. I am sending it there because I would n't like you to read it in Chicago or any other city. I am lonely, Jim. I miss my "pard" more than I had supposed it possible. It is five o'clock. We were to go to Grosvenor Square to tea to-day — do you remember? And to-night we were to attend another "confoozle-um" (as you called it) at the Cray-Crofts. That young Australian poet will be disappointed not to meet you. I shall not go out. You 've broken my heart, and my death may be announced any moment. But I am not sorry I met you. I am glad Twombly is going with you. I wish I had — only you did not ask me again, as I hoped you would. I 'm ashamed — or ought to be — to say how lost I feel without you. However, I 'll get over this. You must not worry about me; I know myself a great deal better than you do. I am a changeable person. At the same time, I did n't suppose any human being — any man — could cause me to miss him as you have done. You interested me.

You brought something back into my life which I needed — a waft of wholesome mountain air. Now it is gone, I seem to be stifling. But no more of that. I 'm not complaining. I 'm going to write you the cheeriest letters, and you must let me know all about the mine;

and when you send my shares you put your own name on them; it will make them more valuable to me.

Your partner, MARY BRIEN.

Jim sat for a long time, slowly re-reading each phrase, and wondering how much of its emotion was genuine, how much assumed. It was all too far away now, that life in London, to stir him deeply. The mountains, the roaring stream, the cabin — these were realities. The London streets, the teas, the receptions, Mrs. Robertson, Mary herself — all were parts of a dream-world, as insubstantial as the valley mist of a morning, which seemed to be a roadway of granite, but rolled away like a curtain as the sun rose. He began to love that dream, and to cling to its memory as he had often clung to a beautiful vision in boyhood. He turned to his bunk with a somber face, for both Mary and Bessie were lost to him, and he was the lonely miner again.

"I reckon the Lord did n't intend me to be a man of a family. Anyhow, I 'm right back where I was when I started East, and *now* I take root."

THE next morning, as he was crossing the divide, he met Cuyler of the Ella Grace.

"Hel-*lo*, Jim!" said he, in cordial surprise. "When did you get back?"

Jim went straight to his mark. "Last night. Say, Cuyler, you 're the very man I want to see. What 's the meaning of all this boom in the Ella Grace?"

Cuyler had the calm face of a poker-player, and remained non-committal. "Why, I don't know as it *is* a boom. The stock is crawling up slowly, but then we always expected it to do that."

Jim reached out and took him by the collar. "See here, Sam; I don't care what your game is, but I want to ask you a business question, and I want a straight-goods answer."

"Sail ahead," replied Cuyler, bracing himself.

"I went to England to sell stock in our hole-in-the-ground. I 've roped a man to go in if the hole shows the 'pay streak' to suit him. Well, now, would you sell?"

Cuyler remained as blank of visage as a Chinese idol. "How much are you asking?"

"Two hundred thousand for a half-interest."

"You want an answer now?"

"Right now."

"It 's between us — strictly?"

"Why, sure thing."

"Double your price. Good morning."

Jim gave out a yell which scared a mother eagle from her nest high on the shoulder of Lizard Mountain.

Cuyler turned and came back. "See here, Jim. Before letting anybody else in, see me, will you? I may have a scheme."

"All right," replied Jim, and wired the doctor: "Things are bilun'. Come on."

Three days later he received a letter from the doctor in answer to his telegram:

Your wire only confirmed me. I 've said nothing further to Twombly, who is too much interested in Bessie to care whether school keeps or not. But don't you worry, old man; he 's overdoing the thing. She 's getting a little weary of him, and Mrs. Ramsdell tells me very privately that your pulling out was a good move. It taught the girl a lesson. She 's wild to get started West, and I notice Twombly has to just about drag her out to play tennis. If she knew just how you feel about the London girl she 'd be happier. I told her to mind her own business and be a good little girl and I 'd take her out to see you. We 'll leave here Sunday night on the Santa Fé. We 'll probably lay over a day at the Springs, and be with you Wed. night. We can let Twombly in on a quarter-interest or not, just as you think best. If you 've turned up the actual ore of the Ella Grace vein, we don't need any outside aid. So long.

Yours, Doc.

XV

ON THE GRIZZLY BEAR TRAIL

JIM, imperturbable and serene, met the party at the station. He had gone back to his rightful character, and looked very handsome in a loose blue shirt, broad white hat, and dark trousers belted at the waist.

"Howdy, folks, howdy!" he said in general greeting, and shook hands all around without hurry or embarrassment. "Glad to see you all safe. I 've herded the peaks all the week fer ye. They 're all here."

"Oh, Mr. Matteson, how cool you look!" said Bessie. "And oh, is n't it wonderful here!"

Mrs. Ramsdell was gasping, also. "It is like the Alps. No wonder you grew enthusiastic about it."

"By Jove!" called Twombly, "it 's more like the Andes. You know, I 'd no idea it was to be like this."

"Where is the mine? Can we see it from here?" asked Bessie, eagerly.

"Now, doc, I reckon you 'd better corral this herd of tenderfeet and get 'em off the platform," said Jim. "The 'bus is waitin' to take you all to a hotel; and I —"

"A hotel!" cried Bessie. "Oh, I thought we were going to camp out in the woods."

"Time enough for that," put in the doctor. "I want to see one square meal at the Occidental before getting down to beans and bacon. That buffet-car lunch was a hollow mockery."

Jim bundled them all into the 'bus without ceremony, and they were at the hotel before Bessie had time to exclaim twice. No sooner were they in their rooms than the women began again to cry out and exult over the splendor of the mountains. They ran out upon the piazza to watch the light as it climbed the highest slopes and lighted them into unspeakable glory, second only to the clouds themselves. The women stood with clasped hands, but not in silence.

"Is n't it heavenly! Oh, if I could only paint it before it goes!" Bessie murmured in a sort of awe.

"I begin to understand why Willard always runs away to the mountains when he has a moment's leisure," said Mrs. Ramsdell. "I came to Denver with him once, but declined to go farther. I had no conception of this."

"Was n't he fine?" Bessie said musingly.

"Who, dear?"

"Why— Jim, of course."

"Oh, yes, indeed! He looks at home out here, and has quite forgotten his London trip, I hope. I like his rugged strength."

"So do I," replied Bessie. "But I never can forgive him for running away without saying good-by to me."

"Well, you know I never blamed him very much. You certainly flirted unconscionably with Mr. Twombly that night."

"Well, suppose I did? There was that London affair to be explained, and Mr. Matteson did n't appear to think it worth while to refer to it at all."

"Perhaps it was a painful subject."

"You said that before," said Bessie, pouting. "I don't like it. I don't see why it should be painful. If he did n't encourage her, then his conscience is clear."

Ramsdell came out on the piazza, smiling and rubbing his hands as if he were the proprietor of the view and anxious to sell it.

"Well, girls, what do you think of this? Up to the advance notice?"

"Oh, it is beyond anything!"

"Wait till you tread the Grizzly Bear trail; then you 'll shout."

"We will *not* wait. We are going to shout now," replied Bessie. "There can't be anything finer than this. It is impossible."

"Where is Jim?" asked Mrs. Ramsdell.

"Gone up the trail."

Bessie's face lengthened. "Why did he run away again?"

"To get out of danger, I reckon."

"Danger! What danger?"

"I don't know; but I think he was tempted to kill Twombly. But, girls, I 've got great news —" he lowered his voice.

"What is it?"

"The Ella Grace has struck a wonderful vein of free-milling ore and doubled the value of our claim. We don't need Twombly at all."

"Oh, goody, goody!" Bessie began to dance. "I knew I 'd bring good luck."

"But, Willard," said Mrs. Ramsdell, "I don't see — why that should —"

"Because, my dear, the Ella Grace and the Concordia are now on the same vein, and we are in exact line. We *thought* we had the same vein as the Concordia, but we did n't *know it.* Now we are certain, and Jim has an offer from the Concordia people of half a million for a half-interest."

The women stared in silence for a moment; then Bessie said:

"A half-million! And half of that is Jim's?"

"*Now* will you be good!" exclaimed the doctor. "I guess Twombly's nose is awry. But let me tell you this, my girl: you 've got to eat humble hoe-cake with Jim."

"Well, I don't think I *shall.* Let him take his gold and go to England and get that 'society woman' if he wishes. I won't put a straw in his way."

"If you put a balsam-fir in his way he 'd jump it, I reckon," laughed the doctor, in boyish glee. "But come, supper is waiting below. We must eat to live if we live to eat. All the world is ours to-night. To-morrow we will go to see our golden mountain."

Twombly came down to supper looking very well cared for indeed; but Bessie was thinking of Jim, and of how graceful and big and *natural* he looked. He fitted into the landscape, while Twombly grew more and more unpleasantly artificial by contrast, and his attentions at the moment were wearisome. She was bitterly disappointed in Jim. If he had only shown some constraint; but he did not. On the contrary, he was perfectly at his ease, and his eyes looked into hers like those of a casual acquaintance. He did not seem to notice what she wore or — or — anything. He did n't seem to care what any one thought or felt.

"Jim will be down in the morning," the doctor was saying, "and we 'll all go up to the mine and take dinner. He had to go home to set a ham a-b'ilin' and wash up the table-linen. He 's profoundly titivated at the idea of having a couple of women to dinner."

"He did n't look it," replied Mrs. Ramsdell. "He seemed very much in his element."

"I don't think he cares in the least about our coming," said Bessie.

"If he did he would n't show it," replied the doctor.

After supper they all went out and strolled up a side street to a little knoll which commanded a view of the valley and the town, and there sat to watch the sun go down. For the most part they sat in silence, while the gloom deepened over the river and the lesser peaks grew cold, like torches blown out one by one.

The valley was nearly circular in shape, and had been formed, apparently, by the coming together of two swift streams. "These first cliffs are three thousand feet in almost sheer rise, while the true rim of the cañon or valley, that dove-gray amphitheater, is five thousand feet higher than where we sit; and lastly, that peak, old Lizard Head, is seven thousand feet above us." The doctor gave these figures with a sort of proprietary gusto. "This is the Wagon Wheel, and that is the Gap. The Rio Grande enters the Gap and stops. When the Rio Grande stops it is for cause. There is no other outlet, save by burro-trail."

"What is a burro-trail?" asked Bessie.

"You 'll know to-morrow. And put on your divided skirts. Jim will put you on a man's saddle; it is n't safe to ride the Grizzly Bear trail womanwise."

The women looked at each other slyly, as if to say, "Well, now the trail is upon us."

Suddenly, during a pause in their conversation, a faint crackling, rattling noise was heard, and a far-off halloo. These sounds seemed above them on the almost perpendicular wall of the mountain.

"What is that?" both women inquired.

The doctor listened. "Sounds like a burro-train." He listened again. "That 's what it is — a burro-train on the North Star trail."

The women rose and looked upward. "Willard," said Mrs. Ramsdell, "you don't mean to tell me that there is a living creature up there — a four-footed one?"

"I suspect there are about twenty," he replied, scanning the cliff. "There they come!" he exclaimed, pointing to a jutting shoulder of the cliff. "See them!" Round a lofty point the train of patient little animals crept, their sharp hoofs tossing the pebbles in their path.

"Why, they look like lambs!"

"How little they are!" exclaimed Bessie.

"They are about a third of a mile above us," laughed the doctor. "See the man! He 's little, too. It 's a long way up to them."

Thenceforth the sunset was forgotten, and the women watched the descending train with breathless anxiety.

"Oh, the poor little things! Suppose one of them should fall!"

"Why do they weave back and forth that way?" asked Bessie.

"No other way to get down. That 's the way the trail runs on steep slopes. They could n't come head on."

"A trail! Is *that* a trail?"

"That 's a trail."

"Is the trail to our mine like that?"

"Yes, only worse."

Mrs. Ramsdell fetched a deep sigh. "Well, I guess I don't care to see the mine, thank you."

The doctor changed his tune. "Oh, it is by no means as dangerous as it looks," he hastened to say.

"I 'm not afraid," said Bessie; "only I *do* think it mean to load those little things and then hurry them down such steep places. Oh, see them go round that rock! Why, they 're right on the edge of it. Oh, dear! They 'll surely fall."

"Don't worry," the doctor said reassur-

ingly. "You could n't throw one of those little chaps from the trail. They go over that rock twice a day all the year round, and never slip a cog."

"This is all immensely foreign to my notion of America," put in Twombly. "If that driver were dressed in a conical hat and wore a gay sash, I could imagine myself in Spain. I 'd forgotten that your miners use these little asses."

"We borrowed most of our packing ideas from Mexico, and these burros come from the Mexican settlements to the south of us."

At last, moving like some smoothly geared articulated machines, the little beasts came past. Their heads were low, their ears flapped rhythmically, and their little feet made a pattering noise. They bore their burdens without apparent effort, and yet each carried, the doctor said, one hundred and fifty pounds of ore.

Not till they had passed did the women give another thought to the mighty pageantry of flushing, fading, passing color; and as it was growing dark and cool, they began to walk slowly back toward their hotel, cloyed with color and the grandiose, glad of the

commonplace walls and furniture of their rooms.

Meanwhile Jim, on his way up the trail, was thinking of the change in Bessie. The sight of her had shaken all his firm resolutions, and started him dreaming of a home, and a wife to light and warm the home. Maybe the doctor was right. "I 'll find out," he said, in answer to his doubts.

At breakfast next morning Mrs. Ramsdell flatly refused to consider mounting a man's saddle.

"Very well," replied her husband; "then you must walk all the bad places, and that means nearly three miles. I 'd advise stout shoes in any case; the road is rough."

"I 'm not afraid," said Bessie. "Everybody rides that way out here."

"I don't care; that does n't help me any," Mrs. Ramsdell replied.

Once outside the hotel, they found Jim busy with a little herd of saddle-horses. He was going from one to the other, examining stirrups and straining at the cinches. He wore a loose blue shirt with a small red-brown tie, and his trousers were tucked into a sort of tan-colored boot with side laces, the mod-

ern miner's boot. He looked extremely alert and very handsome and masterful as he moved deftly about his work.

"Good morning, Mr. Matteson. Which is my pony?" called Bessie.

"Right here," he replied, patting a small roan mare dozing with lax lips. "Safe as a clock."

As Jim took charge of the company his thought returned to the make-believe pack-train he had organized and directed for Mary, and it seemed to him at the moment too absurd to have even been a dream. It was of another world. He shook himself clear of the recollection, and his voice was clear and jovial as he said:

"Doctor, you take the bay, and put Mrs. Ramsdell on the sorrel. Twombly, you jump that pinto, and bring up the rear."

"Are n't you going to ride?" asked Bessie.

"No; I 'm going to walk and look after the rest of you tenderfeet," he replied. "All ready, now." He put down his hand, and she put her foot into it readily enough; but her heart filled with a sudden timidity as she felt the power in his hand and arm.

The moment she touched the saddle she

flushed. "Oh, I forgot. It 's a man's saddle; I must get on differently. Look the other way, please."

Jim smiled, and did as he was bid. When he faced her again she was seated astride, very self-conscious and flushed, but determined.

Jim looked at her as though nothing unusual had been said. "Now are you all right? Can you stand in your stirrups?" She rose on tiptoe. "That 's about right. Now take the reins in your left hand. I 'll lead the old mare, so you need n't bother to rein. Just take it as easy as you can." He had time now to look at the others. "Are you all set, doc? Line up, boys!"

As the horses fell into line, Bessie turned a radiant face to the doctor. "Oh, is n't this fine!"

"Have all the joy you can now," he malevolently replied. "We may be obliged to blindfold you both before we round Hell's Corner."

"No, sir," cried Mrs. Ramsdell; "I go to my destruction with my eyes open."

"As you prefer," the doctor replied, as if yielding a point. For the first half-hour they

kept the broad wagon-road, and Bessie exclaimed: "Oh, this is splendid! I like trailing."

Jim smiled up at her. "When you get back to this road again you 'll know what a mountain trail is."

"I want to know. I want you to teach me," she replied. Her eyes fell before Jim's searching glance.

A little farther on he halted the train and came alongside her pony to tighten the cinch. "We hit the trail now," he said.

The doctor dismounted, and tugged at the main cinch of his own saddle. Twombly was left to take care of himself, but he seemed to be getting on very well.

"Do you see that line across that black slide?" asked Jim of Bessie.

"Away up there? Yes."

"We cross there."

"Oh, no; it can't be possible!"

"All ready? Forward, march!" called Jim, and his voice rang out with such determination as men voice when going into battle. He intended Bessie to feel the solemnity of entering upon the Grizzly Bear trail. He led the way into an obscure, narrow path which left

the road and angled away among some small pines and shrubs. It ran for some minutes to the right, then turned abruptly to the left, and climbed again. As she rose, a sort of exaltation seized upon the girl, and she grew pale with a pallor that was beautiful to see.

"Oh, this is wonderful!" she exclaimed in a voice heard only by Jim. "Now I understand your love for the high country."

He looked back at her with a smile which she could not interpret. "Wait till we put the clouds below us," he replied.

The hills she had considered mountains sank low, dwarfed by the kingly peaks that rose beyond them. The town looked like a handful of a child's building-blocks. The air grew perceptibly cooler and crisper. Immense snow-fields flashed into view, lying like capes of ermine on the northern side of looming peaks. Faint clouds began to come into being far to the south, and still the pathway climbed.

Just as Bessie was getting used to the doubling of the trail, they came out upon an open space, the track of an avalanche, it seemed.

"Now don't be scared," called Jim.

"Whatever happens, hang to your saddle — and nothing will happen. We 've got to cross this slide."

The trail led nearly athwart the loose bed of shale which hung but insecurely on the slope. To Bessie each step of her horse seemed to threaten disaster. Below, for hundreds of feet, the slide ran so steep that it seemed a touch would set it in motion, carrying everything before it.

The girl clung to the pommel of her saddle and looked straight ahead, finding comfort and security in the sight of Jim's powerful and confident figure. It seemed to her that danger thickened at every step; but Jim called back cheerily: "Don't be scared. It 's all right. It looks worse than it is."

Something in his face and voice made her very happy, and she smiled with a brave little contortion of the lips, which moved him deeply.

When they reached the firm trail beyond the slide, he halted and came back to her side.

"How do you like it — so far?"

"I don't like 'slides.' Are we over the worst of it?"

A scream from Mrs. Ramsdell prevented

his answer. The doctor, walking beside her horse, had crowded him off the path, and he was sliding slowly down the rattling shale.

"Hang on!" shouted Jim. "He 'll come up again."

The horse realized the situation, and, struggling bravely, soon regained the path. When they reached firm footing, Mrs. Ramsdell turned a white, accusing face upon her husband.

"Willard, I am going to walk."

"I would n't, my dear. You 're over the worst of it," he replied, and persuaded her to remain in the saddle while they began to climb again.

"Where are we going?" called Bessie. "I can't keep direction, for the life of me."

"We turn right under that ledge," said Jim, pointing to a huge jutting cliff. "Right where you see that man the trail rounds the elbow."

"How small he looks! He 's no bigger than a pin. Is that the very top?"

"Oh, no; but the trail is comparatively level after we reach that. It 's a long way to the mine yet."

The mounting was now so rapid that Bessie

was forced to cling to the saddle with both hands, while the mare toiled terribly, lunging upward for a few rods, and stopping on the turns to rest. These moments gave time for a word or two, and each moment Jim grew distinctly more lover-like. He was indeed powerfully moved by the eager, wonder-filled face of the girl, who looked like some adorable child, with her hair blowing about her flushed cheeks.

"Is n't it nice to think the little burros don't have to carry their sacks of ore up these awful trails?"

Jim did not tell her that they carried lumber and sawmills, grindstones and stoves, and big plates of boiler-iron, and boxes and barrels. He left her in unpained ignorance.

At last they reached the big rock, and Jim again halted and came back to say, "You 'd better get off and rest," and putting his arm around her, took her from the pony and set her on her feet, all in so matter-of-fact a way that she could not cry out or even refer to it.

"Perhaps he thinks that is the way to help ladies off," she thought.

"Now we are going to cover a piece of trail

that will make you nervous; but you 'll be all right if you stay right by your horse. You can walk if you feel like it; but it 's just as safe on the horse, and a mighty sight easier. What do you say?"

"I 'll do as you think best," she replied; "but I thought you said the trail was level?"

"It is; but it 's a little rough underfoot, and almighty mean to look at."

"If you lead my horse I won't be scared," she said, with a smile which made him very tender of her. He turned to Mrs. Ramsdell. "I 'd advise you to walk, unless you feel all right in the head."

Mrs. Ramsdell stared with round and frightened eyes.

"Why, please?"

"The ticklish part of the trail is to come," said the doctor.

"I thought you said the worst was over."

"Reckon you 'd better ride ahead, doc, and let her walk just ahead of me, so I can keep an eye on her."

The women looked at each other in a wordless communication of terror. Then Mrs. Ramsdell faced her husband. "Willard, what *have* you got us into? I 'm going back."

Bessie deserted her. "Oh, no. Let 's go on. I 'm not afraid."

"That 's the talk," said Jim.

Twombly, who was sticking to his saddle to the dismay of his horse, called out: "Bravo! Let us proceed."

The doctor was disturbed. "You must n't turn back now, when the very finest scenery is coming. My dear, be a brave lady."

"Scenery is of no value to a lady with a broken neck," replied Mrs. Ramsdell. "If I go on I shall walk."

The doctor helped his wife to the ground, and then rode by, leaving her horse to follow just ahead of Twombly. He was a little disgusted with her unreasonable terror.

"Line up! Line up!" called Jim, and the horses began to move. "Fall in just ahead of me," he said to Mrs. Ramsdell, "and look straight ahead. I 'll take care of you."

Bessie fixed her eyes on the doctor's pony and rode resolutely on. As he reached the big rock the pony seemed to be walking calmly out into space to his destruction; but just on the verge, while outlined on the sky like a figure on a monument, he turned on his hoofs as if on a pivot, and disappeared. A

moment later the girl found herself gazing over her horse's head into an abyss a thousand feet deep. Her scalp lifted in a spasm of mortal terror; she clutched her steed by the mane, and bowed her head. As she did so a vast report broke from an unseen mine and went crashing away from cliff to cliff with portentous rumbling as of certain doom. For a moment the girl believed she had fallen from the cliff; then she became aware of the calm movement of her horse, which neither started nor hastened her step at the monstrous crash.

Jim was saying, "Go on! There is no danger if you walk straight." He had one hand under Mrs. Ramsdell's shoulder, and was steadying her. She seemed about to faint.

The trail was indeed fearsome. It appeared to be nothing but a seam in a prodigious wall of rock three thousand feet in height. A stratum of slate had been picked out and crushed with hammers to make a pack-trail which was wide enough, where they stood, for safe passage, but appeared to narrow in the distance to a path as dangerous as a half-inch cable swung above Niagara. Far down

below, the Grizzly Bear was roaring, and around old Lizard Head the thunder-clouds were developing with enormous power and celerity.

Jim looked back at Bessie. "It 's all right. I won't get you into danger. Come on."

Mrs. Ramsdell tottered forward, encouraged by her husband and by Jim, until she reached a broader portion of the ledge, when she regained a little of her confidence.

"Keep your eyes high! Don't look down!" called Jim, and Bessie lifted her head. A sudden exaltation seized upon her. The rolling clouds on the high peaks, the roaring of the savage stream far below, the sound of the wind on the opposite wall of the cañon, the stupendous heights and depths, moved her so profoundly that she forgot her fears and rode forward with hands clutched in the hair of her loyal mount. Whenever she felt sick with terror of the abyss, she fixed her eyes on Jim's tall form, and was made brave by admiration of his grace and power.

Twombly rode along, exclaiming at intervals: "By Jove, now, this is impressive! It 's like the Andes. How high are we now?" he called to Jim.

"Less than ten thousand feet," replied Jim.

"The trail is perfectly level now for two miles," he explained to Bessie.

As she gained in confidence, the girl began to look up and down and to measure the immensity of the mountain wall, round which the trail ran like a girdle.

Suddenly a piercing, peculiar whistle sounded, followed instantly by a terrific crash of thunder, out of which Jim's voice rose: "Turn out, doc!"

"All right," called the doctor.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Ramsdell, whose fright returned in full flood. "Was it a mine exploding?"

"A burro-train. We must reach a 'turn-out' before they do."

Across a side cañon and round a sharp point, a drove of laden burros crawled in single file. It was precisely as if they were walking an invisible tight-rope. They slid across the face of the mountain like a string of beads on an oiled wire.

At the head of the side cañon a widening of the roadway permitted the two trains to pass, and there the doctor drew up. Riding his horse to the very edge of the cliff, he dismounted, and came back to meet his wife.

"Come, my dear; there is n't a particle of danger."

Jim came back to Bessie's aid. "You 'd better get off, I reckon. It 's a tight squeeze, and sometimes those little jackasses get to crowding."

After helping her to alight, he led her horse close to the doctor's beast, and then, taking the girl by the arm, stood beside her and very close to her, with the horses crowded to the edge of the rock.

Bessie looked up at him archly, expecting to meet his glance, but he was looking away at the oncoming burros with an anxious wrinkle on his brow. As the little beasts caught sight of the women they began to weave about and point their ears with concern.

"Whoo-oosh!" yelled the driver. "Go on there, you fools!"

"Don't crowd 'em!" shouted Jim. "Give 'em time. Don't you see the women here? Give 'em time."

Bessie realized that it was not quite so safe as Jim had tried to make her feel it to be.

"Don't take hold of the horse," he commanded. "Take hold of me. Don't get scared if they crowd us a little."

The leader of the train, with bright eyes fixed on Mrs. Ramsdell's skirt, sidled by; but the second beast paused, and those behind pressed on.

"Whoo-oosh! There, go on!" yelled the driver.

"Don't hurry 'em, you idiot! Give 'em a chance," called Jim again. "Stand close, doc. Keep quiet, everybody. They 'll pass in a minute."

Twombly had dismounted, and stood beside his horse also, and the three men formed a buffer between the burros and the women and horses.

"No cause to worry," said Jim to Bessie. "I won't take you where I run any chance of losing you," and something in his glance made her forget where she stood. Twombly was as if he had never been.

Twice Jim laid his hand on a crowding, shuffling beast and held him from the two women, and at last the jam gave way. The little stream of gray and brown mules passed on, and the way was clear.

Mrs. Ramsdell was sick with terror, but a knowledge that it was now as easy to go forward as to turn back nerved her to complete

the journey. It was a tremendously dramatic half-hour. The sunlight failed suddenly as a heavy storm-cloud swept westward of Lizard Head, and pealing thunder broke like monstrous cannons from the heights. The scene that had been so radiant with beauty became suddenly cold, gloomy, and illimitably threatening.

At last they swept round the corner of the ledge into a wooded, grassy, flowery country, where the trail was a smooth purple path winding among aspens and dwarf oaks.

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Bessie, and Mrs. Ramsdell, drawing a deep sigh of relief, was able to smile faintly.

Far ahead of them rose a great peak, seemingly at the head of the grassy valley, which led upward at an easy grade. On this peak vivid sunlight lay warm and golden. All along the trail flowers waved — gentians, asters, Indian paint-brush, sweet-williams. The slopes were radiant with bloom, and the wind in the aspens was as gentle as a baby's breath. A few moments later the sunlight came racing down the gulch, and the world was again dazzling with light and odorous with bloom.

"There," called the doctor, triumphantly, "is n't this worth while?"

Mrs. Ramsdell could not instantly throw off her terror, but Bessie was radiant with delight. She asked Jim to pick some flowers for her, and he obediently did so, and she stuck some in the band of his hat, and the action seemed to them both to be very significant. Jim was finding the trail more beautiful than ever before in his life. It was very much worth while, this playing guide to a pretty girl.

"An hour's climb, and we 're at the mine," said he. "That is the Concordia. The Ella Grace is over the ridge to the left. We are between."

The cabin stood where a poet or a fastidious trailer would have set it, on a wooded terrace well toward the head of the cañon, and about fifty feet above the stream. From the door, range after range of peaks, each more than fourteen thousand feet above the sea, billowed away, gleaming with green and gold and garnet, mingled with snow, over which the clouds dropped purple shadows.

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed Bessie.

"I thought mountains were either bare or snowy. These are lovely."

Mrs. Ramsdell, having come safely through deadly perils, was also disposed to enjoy the scene to the full.

"I never expect to see it again," she said, after admitting the beauty of the view.

"Oh, I like it! May I come again?" Bessie asked of Jim.

"Why, sure. Every day, if you like."

"And I want to climb one of these peaks. That one — how high is it?"

"Nearly fifteen thousand feet — about as high as the Alps," replied the doctor.

Bessie stopped suddenly in the midst of her dancing, and laid her hand on her breast. "What 's the matter with me, doctor? My throat hurts me, and so does my head."

"That 's the rare air," laughed the doctor. "Better not get too ambitious. Put off the climb for a day or two."

"Oh, the poor horses! Did they feel this way carrying us up? And you, Mr. Matteson, it must have been hard on you."

Jim smiled, and the doctor said: "This is his country; he 's used to it."

"Well, now, folks," said Jim, heartily, "make

yourselves at home while I see what my Chinaman is doing about dinner. Doc, you might take the girls over to the mine."

"No, no!" cried Mrs. Ramsdell. "*You* must show us the mine. It would n't be right for anybody else to do so. Don't you think so, Bessie?"

"Oh, please do, Mr. Matteson; never mind dinner. No, I 'll tell you, aunty; let 's help him get dinner, and then we 'll all go to the mine."

Jim reluctantly permitted them to enter the cabin, which was built of the fine, straight boles of the aspen, and was cozily set on the sunny side of a grove of stocky pines. It presented indubitable signs of having been recently swept and garnished. A smiling Chinaman was clattering busily about on the bare floor of the kitchen lean-to, which Jim had hastily constructed after his return. Savory smells issued from various pots and tins, and the women looked at each other with sly grimaces of amusement while surveying the housekeeping methods and utensils.

The bunks were swung up against the wall. The chairs (which were made of long slabs, with a shorter slab for support) were freshly

scoured, and a big table, also of slabs, filled the center of the room and supported some heavy crockery and tinware.

"Is n't it all delightfully primitive?" said Mrs. Ramsdell. "I 'm glad I lived to see it. Who made the chairs?"

Jim looked a little self-conscious. "I did. Like 'em?"

"I think they are wonderful. How did you ever think of leaning two sticks together like that?"

The doctor interposed. "Come, now, I can't have Jim take undue credit. These are the regulation miners' chairs. They are not original with Jim. Nobody knows who invented them."

Twombly, whom they had for the moment quite forgotten, appeared at the door with a silver-mounted fishing-rod in his hands. "Do you know, I believe I 'll try for a fish."

"All right," said Jim, cordially. "This is free fishing. No Black Moor restrictions here. Fish in the ripples if you want a trout. Mountain trout are not dead-water fish."

As Twombly spoke, Jim's mind filled with the scenes in the camp trip to the Black Moor and the little crawling stream wherein Twom-

bly had angled while he prepared dinner with Mary looking on; and now, with Bessie's voice mingling with the roar of his river, Mary seemed as artificial and far off as England herself, deep sunk in a dim country crowded with unaccountable and irritating figures — a land of worry and of doubt.

He had sense enough to perceive the vast difference between Bessie's girlish chatter and the half-satiric, half-mournful charm of Mary's speech with him. Bessie was a girl; Mary was something singularly outside womankind as he conceived it. At the moment she seemed a diseased, unnatural being.

Bessie noticed his sudden abstraction. "What are you thinking of, Mr. Miner?"

He looked up with a sudden smile. "I was thinking what I could do with my quarter of the million."

"Oh, let us help you! We can be of service there, can't we, aunty?"

"I don't think Jim will lack advisers on that score," Mrs. Ramsdell replied. "We are prepared to devote a good deal of time to helping you spend money," she added, turning toward Jim.

Jim shook off his abstraction, and said:

"Well, now, you women-folks, *shoo* out o' here. John and I don't want any of your help"; and spreading his arms, he drove them out. "Go set on a bench and watch the peaks go by," he added.

The women laughingly obeyed, and while the doctor unsaddled the horses and picketed them on the sunny slope, Mrs. Ramsdell drew Bessie aside and opened up an intimate conversation:

"He *is* fine! He 's finer than ever out here, for he 's a part of this life. He seems very glad to have you here, and quite takes possession of you. It was beautiful, his care of you on the trail coming up. I could see that, if I *was* scared nearly out of my wits. He took care of us all. Even Willard depended on him."

"He did n't seem to watch over Mr. Twombly," said Bessie, with a malicious glitter of her eyes.

Mrs. Ramsdell smiled. "That is true. He did leave Twombly to shift for himself; and I must say Mr. Twombly is quite capable of caring for himself, and he 's very nice, too — not a bit officious. I guess that he understands that Jim 'has the inside track,' as Wil-

lard says. I 'm sure it would n't require any wonderful insight to discover Jim's mind in the matter."

Bessie looked away at the splendid peaks with a musing smile on her lips. She was very happy, and she wished Mrs. Ramsdell would not define the situation too exactly. It was so much lovelier just to enjoy it and never, *never* put it into words. The storm-clouds still circled old Lizard Head and Ouray like great angry birds struggling over a common prey, but the thunder had ceased. Occasionally a stately great cumulus cloud moved out over the valley like a ship, trailing a wine-purple cloud across the gold and green of the slopes, passing on to the west to catch and cling to some great crag and there dissolve in rain.

In the presence of such prodigious dramas the women ceased to speak, and only dreamed with half-shut eyes, absorbing every detail of this marvelous upper world into which they might never again penetrate — a man's world wherein women were weak as the conies and inadaptable.

Precisely at noon Jim came out, and, lifting his hands to his mouth, sent forth a mellow

shout that went echoing down the valley like a strain of music.

"Hello! hello! Dinner-bell! dinner-bell! din-*ner*-bell!"

The women scrambled to their feet in haste, and Jim met them at the door with a smile.

"Want to wash?"

"Thank you; we should like to."

He led them to a squared pine-stump whereon sat a basin. Beside it a pail of the cleanest water waited. "Here you are. Dip in."

He brought a very obviously new towel, which was as slippery as cambric, and the women eyed it and him with sly amusement.

"Company towel, is n't it?" said Mrs. Ramsdell.

"Sure thing. Do you know what else I 've got?" he asked.

"We could n't possibly guess."

"Napkins!"

"Oh, what marvelous extravagance!"

"I bought a whole mule-load of things yesterday — canned peaches, canned corn, canned salmon, canned celery, canned tomatoes. I sure laid myself out to feed you well, so you 'd stay as many as two days."

He looked at Bessie as he said this, and Mrs. Ramsdell smiled back at him significantly. Bessie exclaimed at the clean tablecloth and the napkins and the silver-plated knives and forks, and then Mrs. Ramsdell said:

"Now that we 've seen them, please put them away, and let us eat with the very ones you use when you are alone. We want to live just as you do when we are not here."

"Impossible!" cried the doctor. "John did n't have time to scour the knives, and Bill was never known to wash a dish."

"Who is Bill?"

"Here he is to answer for himself."

The old miner, spattered with yellow clay, and looking as rusty as a tin can, stood looking in at the door. He seemed to be frozen in an attitude of suspense till the doctor said:

"It 's all right, Bill; they 're real. It 's no dream this time. This is my wife and this is my niece. Girls, this is old Bill Williams, our foreman. Look at him close, for he is to be superintendent of the mine, which hereafter we must call the 'Bessie B.' How about it, Bill? You look stunned."

Bill was apparently nothing but whiskers

and dirt and two black eyes, but he had his share of wit.

"I never expected to see two such women at once—up here," he finally said, with a big smile.

"That 'll do, Bill," called the doctor; "you 've said it. Go wash now and look pretty, or you 'll stand no show against Jim."

It was like a story to Bessie. Old Bill came back and sat in the doorway and told of the wonderful vein they had opened, and the doctor joked him about his worshipful glances at Bessie, and the Chinaman clattered about with chirping impertinence, interrupting the choicest joke by presenting a dish of some inedible food. Jim sat at the head of the table, with Bessie at his right, but was kept too busy by the Chinaman and the doctor to be able to have any conversation with any one.

The doctor expanded from moment to moment. "Come up here a month from now, and you 'll see a hundred men sitting down to dinner, and buildings all around here—a village of our own."

"Oh, no!" said Bessie. "That will spoil it all. One little cabin does n't matter, but—"

"How else do we get our million?" he

replied. "Did you get a bite?" he asked of Twombly, who had quietly taken his seat.

"Oh, yes, indeed! I had the best of luck. I brought back four choice ones. I could have caught more, only I could n't keep away from the mine. I went over to the tunnel and took a look at the ore."

"What do you think of it?"

"It looks very well. Of course I can't tell till I make an assay of it."

"Assay till all 's blue," said the doctor. "We know what it is, and we 're satisfied."

This made them all so anxious to visit the mine that dinner was hastened and the table soon turned over to Williams and his men. Jim led the way to the mine. It was not far away, though a little higher than the cabin, and they soon reached its mouth — an irregular opening in the granite side of the mountain. A heap of country-rock lay just below it, and close beside the little tramway was a pile of rust-colored ore.

Jim picked up a piece from the heap nearest the entrance, and his voice was touched with awe as he said: "Here 's the vein, doc. You don't need any glass to see the color on it."

Ramsdell turned visibly paler as he scrutinized it. "By the Lord Harry, so it is." He turned to his wife. "Deary, this makes us!" His voice was tremulous with emotion, and his wife ran to him and threw her arms about his neck, unable to utter a word. Bessie looked at Jim with big, tear-misted eyes. She had never seen the jovial doctor so deeply moved. His emotion was much more convincing than the gold itself.

Jim was able to speak first, but he was forced into jocularity to conceal his emotion.

"Well, now, see here! Are any of you mourners going into the mine with me?"

At this they all laughed, and the tension of the moment gave way. The doctor straightened up. "Lead on, Macduff. Is it muddy?"

"Not much. Keep right in my track." He took down three candles, and handing one to the doctor and another to Twombly, lighted his own, and they all proceeded.

The tunnel ran nearly straight, with a little up grade, deep into the heart of the mountain. On the ties of the little tramway strips of board were nailed, and footing remained fairly dry, though the ripple of a small stream of water could be heard beneath the track.

The way grew darker and colder as they went in, and once Jim called:

"Shield your light, doc; we pass an old side shaft here on the right."

Once, as they stood waiting for the doctor to relight his candle, Bessie moved close to Jim as if seeking protection.

"Oh, is n't it solemn in here!"

He reached for her hand and pressed it hard. "Keep close to me, and I 'll take care of you. There 's no danger."

"Suppose the mountain should cave in, or something!"

"We keep watch of that," he replied. "When we see a vein of water seeping in, we shore it up and go on."

It was very sweet to be the protector of such a little thing as Bessie seemed to him, and Jim was glad that the mine was growing colder and damper and more mysterious; it gave him an excuse to turn and reassure her.

"Step out bravely. Don't get scared. I won't take you into danger."

They heard, at last, the sound of picks, and came upon a couple of men working at the loosened rock. They had struck the vein at an angle, and were drifting to the left toward the Ella Grace claim.

"Well, boys, how does it go?" asked Jim, cheerily.

"She 's widening out," replied one of the men. "Fully an inch in the last ten feet."

As the doctor and Twombly picked around the wall under guidance of the men, Jim stood close beside Bessie.

"I can't realize that there is a great fortune there," said Mrs. Ramsdell. "It seems like madness to go digging into the mountains like this."

Jim had Bessie's hand, and as he replied, "It 's all here, and it 's ours," his powerful fingers closed on Bessie's small wrist. His words, so far as Mrs. Ramsdell knew, referred to the doctor and himself. To Bessie they meant something more — so much more that a little thrill of fear ran through her blood, and her throat constricted in a singular pain, a pain that was also a profound pleasure. For just a moment she was passive, then her hand struggled to be free.

"I don't like it in here. I want to get out," she cried in a sort of panic.

"Well," said Jim, "I reckon we 've seen all there is to show. Let 's jog along back to sunshine."

XVI

BESSIE CLIMBS A PEAK

JIM had determined to have a talk with Bessie which would set everything to rights, but he was too much a son of solitude to enter upon such a dialogue with the possibility of interruption. He preferred to be with her on a height overlooking the valley, where only the soaring eagle could listen.

Bessie was eager to climb a mountain, and when she spoke of it again next day, Jim said: "All right; but you 'd better wait till your lungs are stronger: the air is mighty thin and cold up there."

"How long must I wait?"

"Oh, a week or so — when you come up again."

"But we 're not going down, at least not while the weather is fine. Aunty says she never expects to get up here again, and so she wants to stay as long as possible."

"I 'm mighty glad of that," said Jim, with great satisfaction. "But I 'll jest nacherly have to rack down the trail and stock up, or you 'll go hungry. We don't intend to let you go at all if canned goods will keep you."

She watched him as he saddled his horses and packed the sacks of ore he wished to have assayed, and when he was about to start, she said, "'Good-by, Jim; take keer of yourself.'"

And he, not knowing that her speech was a quotation, replied:

"I 'm a-goin' to — sure thing. I 've got a whole lot to live for these days."

As he rode off down the trail, his clear voice urging his pack-horses before him, the girl's heart beat quick with admiration of her big, graceful mountain lover, whose every tone and gesture were suited to his splendid environment.

While he was gone the doctor led his flock out upon a grassy shoulder of the mountain, and there they sat, glad of the sun, watching the splendid cloud-dramas of the environing peaks and talking of the mine and its possibilities.

"It puts an end to my Chicago practice,

my dear," he said. "I shall be needed here, and we must get a house in the Gap."

"Oh, Uncle Will! And can I come and live with you here?" cried Bessie.

The doctor looked concerned.

"Don't you think you 'll be lonesome? Think of the plays and concerts you 'd miss."

Bessie stoutly shook her head. "I love it out here. I *never* want to go back."

The doctor laid his right hand over his heart, and sang in doleful voice, "Where-e'er thou art is ho-o-o-me for me-hee-hee," and Bessie threw a pebble at him.

"You brought it on yourself," remarked Mrs. Ramsdell.

Twombly began to feel that he was very much outside of the "whole proposition," and seized the first opportunity to ask:

"About this mine, now, what terms can we agree upon?"

The doctor said: "To tell the square-toed truth, Mr. Twombly, we 're not so anxious to sell as we were; but, seeing that you have come so far and represent some of Jim's friends, we 'll let you have a block of stock at par, and that 's a concession, for we have a fortune under our hands. If you had taken Jim's

offer over there, we would have stood by it; but as you came to examine first, with option of doing nothing at all, we have the same rights. We withdraw our first offer, and substitute one based on the newer developments."

Twombly looked serious. "I suppose I should do the same thing in your place. But I could n't buy a pig in a poke, y' know."

"Well, I tell you, it 's all a gamble anyhow. You could n't expect us to sell gold dollars in hand. We can *see* the money in our ore, and if you come in now you come on our terms strictly. I don't know what we are going to do. We may consolidate with Cuyler. Anyhow, our original offer can't hold."

Twombly was disappointed, but could not blame his American friends for his own "failure to come to time," as Jim called it.

"Very well. I will come in on your terms. I like you all —"

"We like you," interrupted the doctor. "If we did n't we would n't bother with you now."

Twombly went on: "I want to be associated with the mine in a small way, and so do my friends the Briens. I think I shall go back to the hotel to-night."

"You 're welcome to camp here as long as you please."

"I 'm sure of that; but I 'm a little burdensome here, and, besides, I want to see what is doing down at the town."

"Very well. You 'll find a bunk here any time you care to ride up the trail," said the doctor, cordially.

Mrs. Ramsdell was sincerely sorry to see Twombly go. "If we take a house in the Gap, you must make your home with us during your stay in this country," she said as he rose to leave them.

"You 're very kind. I 'm deeply grateful for what you 've already done, Mrs. Ramsdell. You 've made me quite forget that I was among strangers."

Bessie was very sweet and friendly, but a little distant; and Twombly, being an experienced man, understood her changed manner, and said good-by very gravely. He was grateful for the entertainment her innocent flirtation had afforded him, and he was sincerely glad that Jim was restored to favor. He went away down the trail smiling. He was sorry he had not taken with Jim's desperate offer on shipboard, but then —

Jim returned late for supper, and they all gathered round him while he drank his warmed-over coffee and talked of the offers he had had for his share in the mine.

"We 're going to be overrun with yaller-legged experts," he said disgustedly, "and I 'm goin' to lock the trail."

Bessie waited on the table, and would have cooked him something nice, but she was afraid of John Chinaman.

Jim's love for her was very human, and his desire to reach out and encircle her waist had no touch of awe in it. She looked very housewifely as she gathered the dishes together after he had finished. He thought of Mary at the moment, but put the thought aside.

The days which followed were filled with keen pleasure. When alone, the men discussed the mine; when together with the women, the doctor brought the young people into most intimate relation. He all but spoke of them as engaged. For their own part, Jim and Bessie kept to a laughing, elliptical sort of conversation, which allowed him to say things which meant little, so far as words went, but which were made meaningful by glances and by cadences in the utterance.

Each morning the sun rose fair, and each day at eleven o'clock the great clouds gathered on Ouray and Lizard Head, and the thunder broke forth like monster cannon-shots. Each day the doctor said, "Well, shall we go down to the camp to-day?" and each time Bessie quickly cried, "Oh, no; not to-day," and Mrs. Ramsdell, with a shudder, said, "Oh, that dreadful trail! No; let me stay a little longer, Willard. I shall never get up here again."

"Oh, yes, you will," said Jim. "We 'll build a stage-road for you."

It was not all courtship for Jim. He spent hours with the doctor and various business men in discussing the mine and plans for its development. He rode down nearly every morning to the camp, but contrived to spend his afternoons, and, above all, the sunset hours, with Bessie. The girl, on her part, assumed each day more and more of the management of the cabin, and Jim went so far as to kick the Chinaman for saying, "Lilly gal heap boss — no likee."

"See here, John," he said ominously. "That little gal is your boss and my boss, and don't you forget it. If you say another sassy word

to her,"—he seized the little man in his arms and swung him high above his head,—"I bust you like a squash."

John went away rubbing the back of his neck. "All light; me sabby. You belly stlong. Mebbe so lilly gal all time boss."

Jim smiled. "I guess that 's right, John. She 's going to boss us all right along now."

With nice clean tents and good bedding, the women had no complaint to make while the weather continued fair; but the nights grew colder and the clouds of midday more portentous, and at last the noonday showers changed to hail or snow flurries, and then Jim said:

"Well, folks, it 's powerful good of ye to keep me company so long; but I reckon you better drop down to a lower level. I don't want the responsibility of keeping you here much longer. It 's liable to snow us up any time now."

Bessie cried out: "Oh! then I must climb my mountain."

"She calls it *her* mountain now," remarked the doctor.

Jim looked at her thoughtfully. "Think you can stand it?"

"Oh, yes. My lungs are getting stronger. I can run up that little hill and not hurt me at all. I was half-way to the top of the trail to-day."

"Well, then," replied Jim, "we 'll make a try for the pass to-morrow. We 'll start right after dinner, and we 'll see how far you can go."

Of course Bessie invited Mrs. Ramsdell, who promptly refused, and equally natural was the doctor's ready assumption that he, too, had been invited. He referred to the trip a great many times during the day, and always in a way which left no doubt as to his intention to share it.

"I shall enjoy that walk to-morrow," he said. "I 've always threatened to go up to the top of Lizard Head, but always put it off."

"I reckon you better put it off again," remarked Jim. "Cuyler is coming over to talk business with you, and you 'll have to stay here."

"Oh, I can send one of the boys over and tell him to come some other day."

He was relentless up to the moment when Bessie came from the cabin dressed for the walk. He rose, and said: "Well, I suppose

we 'd better be going. It is a nice little climb, and the wind is cold up there."

"Willard!" exclaimed his wife, and laid hold of his coat-tails. "You 're not going."

He sighed, and said: "You see how it is, Bessie. I 'm quite willing to accept your kind invitation, but—"

"Are you ready?" said Jim.

"All ready."

"Then we go," he replied, and they set off up the trail, leaving the doctor behind.

Jim held himself down to a moderate pace, but Bessie's cheeks were soon pink with exertion, and Jim thought it neighborly to stop and call attention to the change in vegetation.

"Here we see the last of the aspen," he said. "The mountain pine will last far up to the snow-line; everything else will drop out. After a little you 'll be able to tell the altitude by the trees."

The path was very beautiful, even after it left the oaks and aspens behind; it was like a curving ribbon in the rich, thick, short grass of the mountain meadows, and in every ravine it crossed a stream of the purest water. Conies squeaked round the rocks, and young

eagles cried from their nests; everywhere were wide fields of snow, except on the broad, slowly ascending valley, which lay wide to the sun.

The girl had a sense of being in a world alone with her lover, and it troubled her breathing almost as much as the walking. When they sat beside the trail to rest, Jim talked of the mountains and the birds and beasts, and pointed out the route they must take to reach the summit.

"Oh, how much farther it is than I thought!" she said.

"It 'll use up the evening," he replied in a tone of satisfaction. "I 'm not worried; are you?"

"Not with you for guide," she replied.

He rose. "Well, we must keep a-lopin'. Let me carry your jacket; it 's a right sharp climb yet."

As they rose, Bessie's heart expanded with a pleasure that was almost pain. The world of peaks became awesome with its grandeur of line and splendor of color. On every side great ranges tumbled against the sky like billows of an opalescent sea, with crests of gold and brown and purple, with fields of snow

here and there like mighty foam-flecks. Every sign of man except the foot-path disappeared, and the girl walked a little nearer the stalwart figure of her guide.

"It scares me," she said in a half-whisper, as they stood side by side to rest.

"I reckon the Almighty wrote his finest poetry right here," he said. "I wish I 'd 'a' known this country before anybody else found it. I 'm a miner — that 's my trade. But sometimes I feel disgusted with the business. It tears the hills to pieces."

They came at last to a big snow-field, and there Jim turned. "Now, my girl, I reckon you better let me help you. It 's a sharp raise here."

She took his hand, and skirting the snow, they came out upon a smooth, steep slope covered with crumbling masses of rock. With fifteen minutes' painful climbing they reached the base of a vast comb of rock rising from the smooth brow of the mountain.

"That is the crest of Lizard Head," said Jim, as he drew the girl into a nook out of the wind, which was keen and strong. "Do you want to go up?"

"Yes; I want to go to the actual summit."

"I like that!" he said, smiling at her. "I like grit."

It was a hard task to reach the topmost crag, but at last they set foot there, and the girl clung to the mountaineer in wordless fear and awe. And he, setting his broad breast into the wind to shield her, felt a quick rush of love for her, she seemed so helpless, so tender, in the midst of the savage world of snow and crag. He put his arm around her and drew her closer within his shelter.

"Did n't realize how cold it was up here, did you?"

"No; but is n't it grand! It makes me want to cry."

"It makes me want to sing," he replied exultantly. "We 're two miles and a half above New York — and London."

Then, without another word of love, he pointed out rapidly the great ranges and peaks which could be seen. He indicated the direction in which lay the Elk Mountains, the Needle Range, the Lone Cone of Sierra Blanca, and the great wall of the Sangre de Cristo. She, on her part, was feeling the sheltering power of his arm and the sturdy poise of his tall frame, and was happy in his nearness.

He had a watchful eye on her. "We must go down; it is too cold up here for you."

When they reached the little sheltering hollow in the ragged base of the crest she was shivering with cold and nervous exhaustion. He took off his coat and made her put it on, and led her round to another niche where the sun fell warm and golden.

"It was almost too much, was n't it?" he asked. But her chattering teeth prevented an answer. "I never took a girl on a trip like this before; women ain't built for this kind o' thing, anyhow. Funny, I never noticed how little and soft girls are." He mused on this for a moment.

"A mountain is always twice as high as it seems; that 's the reason I wanted an early start. It will be sundown before we reach the cabin."

He sat down close to her, and pulled the collar of the coat close around her face. He was a good deal concerned about her, but tried not to let her know it.

"You 'll warm up in a minute," he said reassuringly. "You 're tired, you see, and that wind got into your bones. I wish I 'd brought some whisky; but I never take it

except for snake-bites, and I did n't think of it this time. Are you warmer now?"

He put his arm around her again, and his voice was tender as he said: "I hope you 're not goin' to be sick. I can't afford to lose you now I 've got you." He smiled down at her, and when she turned her face up at him, he said: "You see, I want you to stay in the high country with me — will you do it?"

Her eyes fell, and he hastened to add: "I don't suppose I ought to say anything more to-day; but I sure need ye bad. I 've been chasin' round over these hills till I 'm tired of it. I want to build a cabin up here somewheres, and put you in it, and kind o' take it easy and watch the sun do the work. I 'm a shaggy specimen, but I can take care of you now the way a man 'd ought to do — and I want you. You need n't answer now if you don't want to."

She lifted her hands, and put them about his neck, and gave him a sudden pull.

"I love you, Jim."

"That settles the whole proposition," he said, and gave her a squeeze that made her gasp. "And now we must hurry, for the sun has left us, and you 'll be getting chilled again."

As they stood facing each other, she put her arms about his neck again, and asked:

"Do you love me, Jim? Do you love me better than you do that London woman?"

He took her wrists in both his strong hands, and looked at her very soberly.

"Now, see here, little girl; you must n't worry about that woman. It 's like this: I went down into the low country and among queer people, and I had a queer dream: A woman was good to me, and I liked her. I reckon I liked her mighty well, but I was n't her kind, and she was n't my kind, and we said good-by. And I broke away and came back where I belonged; and the girl I really wanted for my wife was slicker than ever, and I just calculated on getting her. But she had switched off, and was being nice to another chap —"

"It was your fault."

"And so I said, 'Well, Jim, you 're due to chew the bitter cud. You 've trailed up somebody else's deer.' So I climbed higher. But the girl was only foolin', after all, it seemed; and, now we understand each other, let 's let bygones go by, and see if we can't dig out a whole lot of comfort right

here in the mountains. Now, what do you say?"

"I wish the other girl had n't been dreamed," she said wistfully.

"So do I, now," he replied. "But dreams don't last long after sunrise."

He looked at her with a curious smile. "You know what I 'm going to do?" He stooped suddenly and kissed her. "There — you 're mine now. Let us go home and tell the folks what has happened to us."